

# *Torah Wellsprings*

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Succos*





# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Succos

## To Trust in Hashem, Alone

The Chiddushei HaRim zt'l teaches that the mitzvah of sitting in succah is mesugal for believing in Hashem, as it states (Vayikra 23:42-43), 'בסוכות תשבו שבעת ימים... למען ידעו... אני ה' אלֵיֵכֶם', "You should dwell in succahs for seven days... so you will *know*... I am Hashem, your G-d." When one *knows* and believes in Hashem, he will recognize that the source of his parnassah, and of all his needs, are from Hashem. In this world where everything is concealed, it appears to us that parnassah comes from one's hishtadlus. But with the mitzvah of succah, we attain emunah in Hashem, and we believe that everything is from Hashem.

This is why a person must sit in the shade of the *schach* of the succah, and not in the shade of its walls. One must believe that everything is from Hashem, and not from the actions and effects of this world. The Aruch L'Ner (end of Succah) teaches this lesson from the Gemara (Succah 2.), which says that a succah higher than twenty *amos* is *pasul*, and according to one opinion, this is because when the walls are so high, he will be sitting in the shade of the succah's walls. The Aruch L'Ner explains that the succah's walls represent matters of this world (such as his work, people who help him, his hishtadlus), and the *schach* represents Hashem's hashgachah from above. A person must sit under the shade of the schach. He must know that the source for all his needs is Hashem's hashgachah, not matters of this world.

Another halachah regarding the schach is that it must be cut off from the ground. One can't take a growing plant, which is still connected to the ground, and spread it over the roof of the succah for schach. Reb Shamshon Refael Hirsh zt'l explains that this represents not feeling dependent on the ground for our livelihood. For example, a farmer shouldn't think his parnassah comes from the ground. He must detach the plant from the ground when making the schach, so he will know that his parnassah comes from Hashem and not from the ground.<sup>1</sup>

## Preparing for Yom Tov

Chassidim say, "Preparing for a mitzvah is greater than performing the mitzvah." People are surprised when they hear this. How can preparing for a mitzvah be greater than performing the mitzvah? The Sfas Emes zt'l (Ha'azinu 5634) gives a nice explanation for this. It is known that on the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, we don't have any aveiros. The Shlah HaKadosh (Succah, Torah Or, 2) writes, "During the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, the Jewish nation is busy serving Hashem with building the *succah*, buying the four *minim*, and preparing for Yom Tov with inspiration (התעוררת הלב). He explains that these preparations for the mitzvah purify us, and we therefore don't accumulate aveiros during these days. On the first day of Succos, when we actually begin performing the mitzvot (we sit in the succah and take the lulav), this is when we start accumulating aveiros, once again, chalilah.

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1. Yet another halachah of the succah is that it must be situated directly under the sky and not inside a house or under a tree (Succah 9.). The Yerushalmi (Succah 2:3) adds that, *lechatchilah*, one should be able to see the stars through the *schach*. The Kedushas Yom Tov zt'l said that this is so people should be able to look up at the sky through the *schach* and remember to place their trust in Hashem.

He said this explanation to his son, the Divrei Yoel, moments before his son's chasunah. He explained that this is also why a chuppah is customarily placed under the heavens. It reminds the chosson and kallah not to place their trust in their parents or anything else to support them, other than Hashem alone.

It states (Vayikra 23:40) ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון, "Take [the lulav] on the first day." The Midrash (Tanchuma Emor 22) explains that the 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei is called the first day because "It's the first day of reckoning *aveiros*..." (לחשבון) (עיונות). This means that on the day we perform the mitzvos, we might have aveiros, chalilah, but not while preparing for the mitzvos.

The Sfas Emes points out that we see from this that preparing for the mitzvos brought us a greater taharah and kaparah than when we actually performed the mitzvah.<sup>2</sup>

Chazal say, "Whoever didn't see the joy of the *simchas beis hashoeivah*, never saw joy in his lifetime." There was music, bright lights, dancing, and more in the Beis HaMikdash to celebrate the mitzvah of ניסוך, pouring water on the *mizbeiach*. The indescribable joy went on for hours, at the time when the water was being drawn for the mitzvah. When the mitzvah of pouring the water (ניסוך המים) was performed, the shofar was blown, out of joy, but there was no music. The grand festivities ended. The Imrei Emes of Gur zt'l proves from this that preparing for a mitzvah is greater than performing the mitzvah. The celebration happened during the preparation, not so much by the performance of the mitzvah.<sup>3</sup>

Chazal say (Yoma 29), הרהורי עבירה קשין מעבירה, "Thinking about an *aveirah* is worse than doing the *aveirah*." The worst part of an *aveirah* is the preparation for it and thinking about how to perform it. The Sfas Emes (בחוקת) (תרמ"ד) writes that just as thinking about an *aveirah* is worse than the *aveirah* itself, similarly, thinking about the mitzvos is greater than the mitzvah itself. "The rectification of the soul comes from thinking and desiring to serve Hashem."

It states (Hoshea 14:10), צדיקים ילכו, "For the ways of Hashem are straight, the righteous shall walk in them, and the rebellious shall stumble on them." We can explain that פושעים יכשלו means the sinners fall into the mitzvah without preparing for it. Whereas צדיקים ילכו, the tzaddikim prepare themselves for the mitzvos.<sup>4</sup>

### Erev Succos, and the Importance of Chessed

The Shaarei Teshuvah (625) writes, "It is proper to give a lot of tzedakah on *Erev Succos*. Reb Chaim Vital would distribute the entire *tzedakah pushka* to the poor on this day."

Rebbe Chaim of Sanz zt'l would give a lot of tzedakah on erev Succos. He would

2. The Taz (beginning of 581) asks why preparing for a mitzvah is a stronger protection against sin than the actual performance of the mitzvah. According to the Sfas Emes, it is because the preparation is greater than the mitzvah itself.

3. Chazal say that people drew *ruach hakodesh* at this celebration. The Gemara doesn't say that they drew *ruach hakodesh* from the mitzvah itself, but rather from the celebrations, which led up to the mitzvah. This teaches us the greatness of *preparing* for the mitzvah.

4. Some give an *esrog pushka* (a silver *esrog* box) as a gift for a *chasan*. This *hidur mitzvah* (glorifying the mitzvah) differs from most *hidur mitzvahs* because it isn't directly related to the mitzvah. For example, a silver Chanukah menorah becomes part of the mitzvah. The Chanukah lecht are nicer when lit in a silver menorah. A silver *becher* for *kiddush* and *havdalah* becomes part of the mitzvah. The mitzvah becomes beautified in this manner. However, the silver *esrog* box stores the *esrog* before and after the mitzvah is performed, but isn't part of the performance of the mitzvah.

This is because the *esrog* represents the heart, and the amount of *heart* one puts into a mitzvah is measured by how much he prepares *before* performing the mitzvah and by the joy he feels *after* completing the mitzvah.

say that there is no nicer נוי סוכה, *succah* decoration, than the *tzedakah* one gives on *erev Succos*.<sup>5</sup>

Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah writes, "Erev Succos is a special day to give *tzedakah*. It is also the day to find proper guests, poor *b'nei Torah*, for all the days of the *Yom Tov*."

The importance of having guests on Succos is discussed in the Zohar. The Zohar teaches that the seven *ushpizin*: Avraham,<sup>6</sup> Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, and Dovid, come to our *succos* to celebrate with us. When they arrive, they look to see if there are guests at the *seudah*. If guests are present, they remain in the *succah* and bless everyone. But if there are no guests, they leave.<sup>7</sup>

5. The Tsanzer Rav was renowned for his deeds of *tzedakah* and generosity, but surprisingly, he said that he wasn't born like that. But he worked on himself, changed his nature, and became very generous. He said that after he changed his nature, if he met with a poor person whom he couldn't help, he felt as though his skin was being ripped off him. That is how much it bothered him when he couldn't help others.

6. For the first day of Succos, Rebbe Eliezer of Dzikov *zt'l* was extra careful to have a guest because it is the *ushpizen* of Avraham Avinu, who excelled in *hachnasas orchim*. One year, Reb Eliezer of Dzikov didn't have a guest, so he asked his son (the Imrei Noam *zt'l*) to go outside and find someone who needed a meal. His son walked around the streets until he found a homeless man and invited him to his father's *succah*.

The Dzikover Rebbe was pleased with the guest. He said, "Avraham Avinu's guests weren't any better. Avraham cared so much about people that he was eager to bring anyone who desired a meal into his home. At least, on this day, we should emulate Avraham Avinu's ways."

Someone came to Reb Chaim Ozer's *zt'l* home on Succos, and Reb Chaim invited him to eat a meal in the *succah*. Reb Chaim excused himself and said, "I won't be eating in the *succah*. It is very cold outside, and I caught a cold. Chazal (Succah 25b) say מצטער פטור מן הסוכה, 'If one has *tzaar*, he is exempt from performing the mitzvah of *succah*.' But you can go up to the *succah* and eat there."

Shortly after the guest entered the *succah*, Reb Chaim joined him. He explained, "Chazal say that when one has *tzaar*, he is exempt from *succah*, but they didn't say that he is exempt from properly performing the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*."

The Beis Yisrael *zt'l* would often tell this story, and he said (ברוך צחות) that this can be the reason *tzaddikim* stayed in the *succah*, even when it rained. It is because they have guests, the holy *Ushpizin*. Rain exempts a person from *succah*, but not from *hachnasas orchim*.

The practical lesson is that when it comes to *middos*, it isn't an excuse to say that he has צער, distress. Perhaps you aren't feeling well, but that doesn't exempt you from being kind to your fellow man.

7. The Gemara (*Avodah Zorah* 3) tells us what will occur in the future, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu rewards the Jewish nation. The nations of the world will come forward and say that they want another chance to keep the Torah. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will reply, "Fools! It is too late to perform mitzvos now. You had your chance, but you rejected the Torah and its mitzvos. Nevertheless, I have a simple mitzvah, the mitzvah of *succah*. Keep this mitzvah and you will receive reward."

The Gemara relates, "Immediately, the *goyim* will climb up to their rooftops and build a *succah* there. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will have the sun shine brightly, and it will become too hot for them. They will kick their *succos* and leave." (The Gemara explains that although *Yidden* may leave the *succah* if it gets too hot, for the halachah מצטער פטור מן הסוכה, someone who is in distress is exempt from *succah*, but a *Yid* would never kick the *succah* when he leaves. The nations of the world will kick the *succah* in disdain, and therefore, they don't deserve any reward.)

*B'derech tzachus*, we can say that they intentionally built their *succos* on their rooftops because they didn't want people knocking at their door, asking for an invitation. *Yidden*, on the contrary, seek to have guests for Succos.

We can also explain this Chazal as follows:



"My brothers and friends, holy to Hashem, friends of the Above, and loved ones of my soul, think about your greatness when you perform this mitzvah [of having guests on Succos]. In this merit, you earn redemption and freedom for your children, in all future generations. Hashem's honor resides on you all day long... and the *avos hakedoshim* dwell with him in the succah. They are happy with him because he gave his bread to very poor *talmidei chachamim*, and he brought them

into his home. The poor eat the portion of the *ushpizin*. He will receive seven brachos from the *ushpizin*. How could a person not be inspired and excited to perform this mitzvah?!<sup>18</sup>

The Shlah Hakadosh (Succah, Ner Mitzvah 8) writes, "In short, one should invite with his mouth the *ushpizin*, and then he should give their portion to the poor who sit around his table. If they aren't around his table, he should send the food to their homes..."<sup>19</sup>

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The hot sun represents the hardships of life, and the succah represents shelter and belief in Hashem. Non-Jews have emunah in Hashem as long as everything goes well. But when the hot sun bakes down on them, representing difficult times, they kick the succah – they no longer believe in Hashem. But the Jewish nation believes and trusts in Hashem under all circumstances.

8. One of the tzaddikim of our generation, shlita, asked, "How do we invite the *ushpizin* to our homes? How can we say *אזמין לסעודי אושפיזין קדישין*, 'I invite to my meal the holy *ushpizin*?' Who are we to invite these holy guests? However, on Succos, in the beis HaMikdash, we offered seventy korbanos corresponding to the seventy nations of the world, and this brings goodness to them. So, these are days that we do kindness to those who don't deserve it. Therefore, we can ask the holy *ushpizin* that they should extend kindness to us, even if we don't deserve it. Especially, when we have the merit to be in the company of poor guests. The holy *ushpizin* will be happy to join us in the succah.

9. One form of tzedakah is to be mevater to others.

During World War One, the Chofetz Chaim was in exile in Sanubask, Russia. They were unable to locate a fresh esrog, but someone arranged for an esrog from the previous year, and the Chofetz Chaim made a brachah on it in the morning. However, he didn't want to use it for the *נענעים*, shaking the lulav. He explained that people in the beis medresh would be jealous of him, that he could perform this mitzvah, and they could not. Shaking the lulav is a holy custom, but it doesn't permit one to cause pain and distress to others. (ח"ח חיייו ופועליו חלק ג עמ' תתכ"ד)

The following story happened in Yerushalayim. A family built a succah, and one of their neighbors complained that he parks his car in this spot, and they should take down the succah and build it elsewhere. The owner of the succah explained that it is hard for him to move the succah, and he should kindly allow him to use the area for eight days, but the neighbor refused to budge.

The owner of this succah had no choice, so he asked his children to take down the succah and rebuild it nearby. The children were very upset about this, since that spot didn't belong exclusively to the neighbor; it belonged to all residents of the building. They advised their father not to be mevater and leave the succah where it was.

The father replied, "If you want me to use this succah this year, you must move it. I will not sit in a succah if the neighbor is upset about it." The children, naturally, obliged and moved the succah.

On the first night of Succos, heavy stones from the building fell on the car, which was parked in "his" parking spot. Had the succah still been there, the stones would likely have fallen on them, and their lives would have been in danger. They were saved because they were mevater.

In Bnei Brak, someone lived on the fourth floor, and he wanted to build a porch so he could put up a succah there. The neighbors from the floors below told him that he can't do so, because it would make their succos pasul. His other option was to build the succah in the courtyard below. That would mean that every time he forgot a spoon or needed something from home, he would have to go up and down four

There is a famous Rashi (Devarim 16:11): אם אתה משמח את שלי אני משמח את שלך, "[Hashem says:] If you shall bring joy to Mine, I will bring joy to yours." This means if you bring the people who are suffering to your table, and if you give them simchas Yom Tov, Hashem will give you and your family simchas Yom Tov as well. Rashi is referring to this pasuk (Devarim 16:11) ושמחת לפני ה' אלקיך, ואתה ובנך ובתך ועבדך ואמרתך, ויהלוי ויהגר והיתום ואלמנה, "You shall be happy before Hashem, your G-d, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, and the Levite who is within your cities, and the stranger, and the orphan, and the widow, who are among you..." Eight kinds of people are mentioned in this pasuk, and Hashem calls the four categories listed at the end of the pasuk שלי, "Mine" because Hashem feels close to them, and wants people to help them. These four kinds of people are: ויהלוי... ויהגר והיתום ואלמנה "The Levite (who was often poor)... the stranger, the orphan, and the widow." When we bring joy to these four categories of people, Hashem promises that He will bring joy to the four categories of people listed at the beginning of the pasuk: ואתה ובנך ובתך ועבדך ואמרתך, "Your son, and your daughter, and your

manservant, and your maidservant." About this, Rashi writes, אם אתה משמח את שלי אני משמח את שלך, "[Hashem says:] If you shall bring joy to Mine, I will bring joy to yours."

The Imrei Emes asks that there is a fifth category listed in the beginning of the pasuk, for it states ושמחת לפני אלהיך ואתה ובנך ובתך ועבדך ואמרתך, "You shall be happy before Hashem, your G-d, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant..." So, in addition to "Your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant," which are four categories, "You" is also mentioned in the pasuk.

The Imrei Emes answers that indeed there are five categories of people who will be receiving joy from Hashem, and you deserve this because you gave joy to five! You brought joy to the four categories we mentioned: the Levi, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, and you also brought joy to Hashem. This is because Hashem is happy when we bring joy to those in need. So, if you give joy to five, Hashem will give joy to five of yours. They are (1) You, (2) your son, (3) your daughter, (4) your manservant, and (5) your maidservant."<sup>10</sup>

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flights of stairs. But what choice did he have?

But then the neighbor from the first floor told him that he allowed him to build over the area where he generally has his succah. He said that he was mevater, and he will build his succah on a porch that he has on the other side of the building.

This vitur saved his life. There were powerful winds that Succos (תשע"ח), and a roof of a porch from the third floor fell onto the porch on the first floor, where he generally made a succah. The person from the first floor thought he was helping his neighbor, but it was himself he ended up helping.

**10.** Many people in Yerushalayim would show their four *minim* to Reb Shimon Aharon Polonski zt'l, the Tepliker Rav, for his halachic opinion on their level of *kashrus* and *hidur*. The Rav would then ask for a donation for the poor of Yerushalayim.

One person told him, "I can't give money to the poor. I need the money to buy the four *minim*."

The Tepliker Rav disagreed. He said, "You can borrow the four *minim* from a friend (A *kinyan* must be made on the first day of yom tov). You aren't obligated to buy your own set. However, if a poor family is sad on Yom Tov because they couldn't afford a meal, and they shed even one tear, that creates a *kitrug* in heaven, which is very hard to silence."

One year, on the first day of Succos, the Tepliker Rav asked someone to lend him his *esrog* since he didn't have his own. How did it happen that he didn't have his own *esrog*? This is the story: On *Erev* Succos, the



## Taking Advantage of these Days

The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 47:7) gives a mashal of a king who said to a beloved person of his, "You can measure as many gold coins as you want, and you can keep them for yourself." The Midrash said that we can be certain that this person didn't go to sleep, and that he didn't stop to eat. Similarly, the Midrash says, during the forty days that Moshe Rabbeinu was on Har Sinai to receive the Torah, we can be sure he didn't eat, drink, or sleep.

The Sfas Emes (5634) quotes this Midrash and explains that this is the reason no one slept during the Simchas Beis HaShoavah in the Beis HaMikdash. As Chazal (Succah 53.) tells us, "When we were in the Beis HaMikdash, celebrating the Simchas Beis HaShoeivah, we didn't fall asleep." No one was able to sleep. They didn't want to so as not to miss out on the joy and the kedushah that was present and available there.

The Beis Yisrael zt'l said that the same applies to Yom Tov. It should be so precious

to us that we don't want to miss out on a moment.

One of the halachos of succah is that if there are three tefachim of אויר, air, in the roof of the succah, it can make the succah pasul (see Shulchan Aruch 632:1-2). Reb Yechezkel of Kuzmir zt'l said that we can learn from this that emptiness, air, אויר, not doing anything at all, is not good. This is because if there is schach pasul there, and not air, the succah is kosher. (Schach pasul can only disqualify the succah when there are four tefachim of schach pasul.) Air, emptiness, nothingness, make the succah pasul even when the air is only three tefachim. This is a reminder for us always to be occupied with doing good deeds, especially during Succos, when there is so much to attain. It isn't the time to be idle and to be occupied with nothingness.

Shem MiShmuel (Shabbos Chol HaMoed Pesach 5673) writes, "Every moment of the holiday one should prepare himself to accept the holiness that is coming down non-stop." This applies to the days of Chol Hamoed, as well. We should try to utilize our time wisely.<sup>11</sup>

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Tepliker Rav heard shouts from his neighbor's home. He knew this family. They had lost their father, there were young orphans at home, and the mother had remarried, but things weren't going so smoothly.

The shouts continued, so the Tepliker Rav knocked at their door and asked whether he could help. The family told him that one of the children had broken the *pitom* of the stepfather's *esrog*. "The stepfather is now in the mikvah, but we are worried about how he will react when he finds out."

The Tepliker Rav told them, "I will give you another *esrog*. You don't have to tell him what happened. Just say that I asked to see his *esrog* and ruled it was pasul, so I gave you another one." The Tepliker Rav gave them his own *esrog*. He could borrow an *esrog*, but now he had to help this family.

*Esrogim* used to be very expensive, and Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz zt'l would put aside money throughout the year to have enough funds to buy the four *minim*. One year, as he was walking with his package of money to buy an *esrog*, he saw a simple Yid crying bitterly. He asked him what happened.

The man told him that his horse had died, and he couldn't afford to buy another one. He explained that he needed a horse for his *parnassah*. Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz handed him his money bag and told him to buy a horse. With the leftover money, Rebbe Mordechai purchased an *esrog*. It was a kosher *esrog* but not *mehudar*. When he came home, he told his family, "This *Yom Tov*, everyone will make a *brachah* on a beautiful *esrog*. We will make a *brachah* on a beautiful horse..."

That Succos, Rebbe Mordechai davened in the beis medresh of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk zt'l. Rebbe Elimelech said, "I smell the scent of Gan Eden coming from your *esrog*." Rebbe Mordechai told him how he was *moser nefesh* to help another Jew. That merit brought a scent of Gan Eden on his otherwise simple *esrog*.

11. Pele Yoetz (Chol HaMoed) writes, "Chazal (Yerushalmi Shabbos 15:3) say, לא נתנו שבתות וימים טובים לישראל אלא לעסוק

The Mishnah (Avos 3:11) states, המבזה את המועדות... אף על פי שיש בידו תורה ומעשים טובים אין לו חלק לעולם הבא, "Someone who disgraces the yomim tovim... even if he knows Torah and he has performed good deeds, he doesn't have a portion in Olam HaBa." Rabbeinu Yonah says that מועדות refers to *Chol Hamoed*. Rabbeinu Yonah writes, "The Mishnah doesn't need to discuss yom tov because yom tov is like Shabbos [and everyone understands that we must honor the yom tov]. Rather, it refers to Chol Hamoed. [One disgraces Chol Hamoed] when one says that Chol HaMoed doesn't have kedushah like the first days."

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l teaches that there is special kedushah on Shabbos Chol Hamoed. He explains that throughout the year, the holiness of Shabbos is created and formed from our avodas Hashem performed during the weekdays that preceded Shabbos. When it is Shabbos Chol Hamoed, however, the holiness of the yom tov was created from the holy days of yom tov that preceded it. Therefore, this Shabbos is very exalted.

## ושמחת בה - *Simchah*

The Rambam writes, "There is a mitzvah to be happy on all holidays, but it is especially important to be happy on Succos, as it states [about Succos], ושמחת לפני ה' אלקיך שבעת ימים, 'rejoice before Hashem your G-d for seven days'" (*Vayikra* 23).

*Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 529:2) states, "A person is obligated to be happy and in a good mood on Yom Tov, together with his wife and children. How does he make the family happy? By giving the children nuts and roasted grains [or other foods that children enjoy], and buying clothing and jewelry for the women according to his abilities."<sup>12</sup>

From the Torah, the mitzvah of lulav is one day only—the first day of Succos. But the mitzvah of simchah is for all eight days. The Imrei Noam zt'l teaches that from here we see that Hashem wanted the mitzvah of simchah for eight days because He loves it when His nation is happy.<sup>13</sup>

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בתורה, Hashem gave yom tov and Shabbos to Yisrael so they can have time to engage in Torah study. Some people claim they can't study Torah because they are always busy earning a living. If this person uses his time well on chol hamoed, and also during other times when he is off from work, and devotes himself at these times to study Torah, he will also receive reward for the times he was busy working. [Because those times prove that had he had the opportunity, he would have studied Torah all the time.] He should be especially cautious to study Torah on chol hamoed, because chol hamoed are days of judgment. On Pesach, there is a judgment on the תבואה, grain crops, and Succos, the judgment is on water (see Rosh Hashanah 16a), and the gmar din is on Hoshana Rabba..."

**12.** In Yerushalayim, there was a jewelry store near a shop selling esrogim and lulavim, etc. A talmid chacham entered the jewelry store, and a simple Yid went to the four-minim shop. Upon meeting outside, each holding their purchases, the simple person said, "My purchase is superior to yours because I bought a mitzvah. I bought the four minim!"

The scholar responded, "You bought a mitzvah דרבנן (that year, the first day of Succos fell on Shabbos) and I bought a mitzvah דאורייתא. I purchased jewelry for my wife, fulfilling the Torah's obligation to bring happiness to one's wife and family on Yom Tov."

**13.** Think about how much you are ready to invest to purchase a kosher set of four minim. That should help you determine how much effort you should invest to be happy on Succos, because happiness on Succos is also a mitzvah, just like the four minim. Don't allow the yetzer hara to make you sad. Force yourself to be happy.

It states (*Avos* 2:15), ובעל הבית דוחק, "The *baal habayis* is pushing..." We can explain these words with a parable: Customers trying on shoes in the shoe store often have difficulty returning the shoes to the box. When they try putting the shoes side by side, they find the box isn't wide enough. When they try placing one on

Be happy on Succos because Hashem is happy on Succos. He is happy that we removed all our aveiros on Yom Kippur. The Sfas Emes (תרמ"ג ד"ה ימי) zt'l writes, "When the Jewish nation becomes pure from all their aveiros on Yom Kippur, there is immense joy in heaven, and we should participate in Hashem's joy."

The Alshich (Emor) writes, "From the day the world was created, Hashem was never as happy with His creation as the day the Mishkan was built. And in every generation, Hashem is happiest on Succos, for then Bnei Yisrael are cleansed from their sins. The succah is our sign that we attained this purity."

The Shlah HaKadosh (סוכה נר מצוה סוף אות ט) writes, "A person must be happy every day of

Succos, his face should be beaming with joy, because the holy *Ushpizin* dwell with him."

In *Hilchos Lulav* (8:15), the Rambam writes, "The joy that one has when he performs mitzvos is a great service, and whoever refrains from that joy deserves to be punished."

Reb Chaim Vital (Hakdamah l'Shaar HaMitzvos) zt'l writes, "Do not view mitzvos as a burden, as something you wish to quickly 'get over with.' Instead, think that you will earn many thousands of gold coins with every mitzvah you perform. With this thought, you will have boundless joy when you perform the mitzvos, as much joy as someone who received millions of gold coins..."<sup>14</sup>

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the other, the box isn't tall enough. But then the baal habayis of the store comes, and slips the shoes into the box with ease. The baal habayis knows how to push the shoes together in a way that they fit perfectly into the box. The nimshal is that Hashem commanded us to be happy, which means it is within our reach and ability to be b'simchah. We are the baal habayis over our joy, and we can achieve it. The trick is בעל הבית דווקא, to know how to push simchah into our lives, despite life's challenges and difficulties.

Chazal say, הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו, when a person desires to be pure, Heaven helps him. If one tries to be happy, Hashem will help him succeed.

Chazal (Succah 48.) say that we must also be happy on the final night of yom tov (the night of Shemini Atzeres). The Sfas Emes taught that "the final night" hints at the hardships of the dark galus, in the final generation. Even during these challenging times, we are obligated to be happy.

A man once shared his troubles with Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt'l. Reb Shlomo Zalman assured him that despite his problems, happiness was within reach.

The man retorted, "It is impossible for a person suffering like me to be happy."

Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, "I know someone who is a widower, deaf in one ear, and three of his children are childless. Nevertheless, he is always cheerful, always smiling."

The man said, "It can't be. How can he be happy after suffering so much? The story can't be true."

Reb Shlomo Zalman told him that he was referring to himself.

The Alter of Slabodka, zt'l, taught: When the Rambam omits a halachah from his sefer, talmidei chachamim don't assume that the Rambam accidentally overlooked this halachah and forgot to put it in. They are sure that the Rambam intentionally omitted the halachah, and they delve into the topic to understand why the Rambam chose to omit it. So, why do you think it is a mistake when something is lacking and missing in your life? It wasn't omitted by accident, chalilah. Everything is intentional, and for a reason.

There is a Yiddish expression people say when everything seems to be going wrong. The saying is מיטן פיטום אראפ, and the literal translation is "The *pitom* facing down." But notice that we make the brachah on the esrog when it is מיטן פיטום אראפ, the pittim facing downwards. This is a reminder that we should praise Hashem in all situations, with the belief that it is all for the good.

**14.** In military training, soldiers do not use real bullets and live ammunition. It would be wasteful to do



Reb Mordechai of Chernobyl zy'a said that Succos is called זמן שמחתנו, with the interpretation of זמן to mean preparation. On Succos, we prepare and store up on simchah for the entire year (see Magen Avraham, Trisk, Shabbos Chol HaMoed Succos).

Rebbe Shmuel of Lubavitch (The Maharash - Maamarim, 5655) teaches, "Joy [throughout the year] comes from the joy of Succos."

It states, ושמחת בחגך... והיית אך שמח. The Abarbanel writes, "This *pasuk* is a guarantee: If you are happy on Succos, you will be happy the entire year." The Ibn Ezra on the *pasuk* ושמחת בחגך (Devarim 16: 14-16) writes that if we are happy on Succos, we are blessed to be happy forever.

The Pele Yoetz zt'l writes, "We are commanded to be happy, and this becomes a good omen (*siman*) for the entire year. The Arizal's students write that someone who is joyous and has a happy heart, without any distress, on this holy holiday, it is certain that he will have a good and happy year."<sup>15</sup>

Rashi (Bamidbar 29:18) teaches that ninety-eight sheep were sacrificed on Succos,<sup>16</sup> and these 98 sheep annul the 98 curses written in parashas Ki Savo. Avnei Nezer says that we serve Hashem with joy on Succos, and this annuls the *klalos*, curses, written in parashas Ki Savo, which come because (Devarim 28:47) תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה, "you didn't serve Hashem with joy."

Beis Aharon (p.156.) writes, "During the yomim nora'im [Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur], we draw down the bounty with fear, and on Succos, we open the treasures of bounty with our joy."<sup>17</sup>

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l was at a chasunah, performing the mitzvah of simchas chasan v'kalah, when someone asked him, "No one is happier than a chasan and kallah. Wouldn't you use your time more wisely, bringing joy to those who are suffering? Why do you bring simchah to the chasan and kalah?"

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so. However, in battle, they must use live ammunition. If they fail to do so, the enemy will certainly capture them and scoff at their incompetence. The Kedushas Levi (Likutim Avos, ד"ה אם למדת) utilizes this analogy to illustrate what happens when a person serves Hashem without passion and joy. "The extent of his enthusiasm determines how far he can distance himself from materialism and the level of awareness of Hashem he can achieve. However, performing mitzvos mechanically, without passion, is akin to a soldier who neglects to load his weapons with live ammunition during battle."

15. About Yom Kippur it states (Vayikra 23:27) אך בעשר לחודש השביעי יום הכפורים הוא... The word אך is also mentioned in reference to Succos, as it states (ibid. 23:39) תחוגו את חג ה' אך בחמשה עשר יום לחודש השביעי... תחוגו את חג ה'.

The Meshech Chachmah (אך) explains that אך can be translated as "even so." If one didn't do teshuvah, perhaps he shouldn't fast on Yom Kippur? The Torah tells us that, even so, he must fast. Succos, we celebrate the atonement. But what if he didn't do teshuvah and didn't achieve atonement? Perhaps he shouldn't keep Succos? So the Torah writes ,אךthat even so, he should keep Succos.

16. (Bamidbar 29:13-32) כבשים בני שנה ארבע עשר תמימים יהיו "Sheep, within the first year, fourteen perfect ones they shall be." This was brought all seven days of Succos.  $7 \times 14 = 98$ .

17. Once, during Succos, someone informed Reb Meir of Premishlan zt'l that one of his close relatives was sick and his life was in danger. Reb Meir replied, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded us to blow shofar on Rosh Hashanah, and Meir'l did so. Hakaodsh Baruch Hu commanded us to fast on Yom Kippur, and Meir'l did so. Hakadosh Baruch Hu required us to be happy on Succos, and I want to do so. But Chazal say, אין מערבין שמחה בשמחה, one mustn't mix two joys. [On yom tov, we are happy because it is yom tov, ושמחת בחגך, and we shouldn't be happy for other reasons.] If something bad happens, I will be required to accept the sad news with joy, as Chazal say, that one must bless Hashem with joy for bad tidings, and then I will have another joy aside from the joy of yom tov. We mustn't mix two joys. Therefore, I request Hashem that my relative remain alive, so I will be able to focus my joy on the yom tov, alone."

The Chozeh answered that Chazal (see Yerushalmi Bikurim 3:3) say that all one's aveiros are forgiven on the day of his chasunah. The chasan and kallah are worried: How can they be sure they will remain pure, without sin, for the rest of their lives? So, we dance before them. In this manner, we teach them, "If you will be happy, you will remain pure. Your joy will protect you from falling into sin." This can be one of the reasons we have a mitzvah to be happy on Succos – it helps us maintain our purity throughout the year.

One counsel for attaining happiness (taught by the Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch, zt'l) is to daven for it. This is what Dovid HaMelech did, as it states (Tehillim 86:4) שְׂמַח נַפְשׁ עַבְדְּךָ "Gladden Your servant's soul."

Another piece of advice is to believe that everything that happens to you is from Hashem, and for your benefit. When one believes this, he can be happy in all situations. This might be the reason there is a special mitzvah to be happy on Succos. When we sit in Succah, we remember Hashem and we remember the miracles Hashem performed for us in the desert. As it states (Vayikra 23:42-43), בְּסוּכוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים... לְמוֹעַן יֵדְעוּ דִּרְתִּיכֶם כִּי בְּסוּכוֹת, הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי ה' וְאֶלְקֵיכֶם, "You should dwell in succahs for seven days... so you will *know* that I caused Bnei Yisrael to dwell in succahs when I took them from the land of Mitzrayim, I am Hashem, your G-d." When we know Hashem and His wonders and His hashgachah pratis, we will always be happy and satisfied with our lot.<sup>18</sup>

## Appropriate Joy

Shulchan Aruch (529:3) writes, "One should eat, drink, and be joyous on Yom Tov, but the focus should not be on the meat, wine, laughter, and lightheadedness, as they are not true joy. They are levity and foolishness. We are not obligated to engage in silliness and foolishness, but rather in the joy of serving Hashem."

The Rambam (Hilchos Lulav 8:14) writes, "The dancing at the *simchas beis hashoeivah* [in the Beis HaMikdash] wasn't performed by *amei ha'aretz* or by whoever wanted to dance. Only the *gedolim*, *chachmei Yisrael*, *roshei yeshivos*, the heads of Sanhedrin, chassidim, elders, and *anshei ma'aseh* were worthy to dance there. They danced, clapped their hands, played music, and were happy in the Beis HaMikdash during Succos, and the rest of the nation, the men and the women, came to watch and listen."

The Ritva (Bava Basra 121.) explains that the typical person wasn't permitted to dance and perform stunts. This was to ensure that the joy remained holy and that it didn't turn into הוללות, levity.

Sfas Emes zt'l suggests that this concept is hinted at in the word אֶךְ from the verse וְהִיִּית אֶךְ שְׂמֵחַ. 'אֶךְ' is a term that denotes limitation. The Torah instructs us וְהִיִּית אֶךְ 'שְׂמֵחַ', to be exceedingly joyful, but with limitations. Not all forms of happiness are beneficial. We should only seek the joy that will lead to a connection with Hashem.<sup>19</sup>

18. Rebbe Hirsh Rimonover zt'l said that the *schach* hints that Hashem watches over us with hashgachah pratis. He watches over us through the cracks in the schach. Perhaps this is alluded to in the pasuk (Shir HaShirim 2:9) מִשְׁגִּיחַ מִן הַחֲלוּנוֹת, מִצִּיץ מִן הַחֲרָכִים "Observing through the windows, peering through the lattices." We are constantly under Hashem's hashgachah.

19. People sing the song וְשִׂמְחָת בְּחֶגְךָ אֶךְ שְׂמֵחַ, and in this song, they repeat the word אֶךְ several times. *Bederech tzachus*, Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt'l said that this is based on the Chazal, אֶךְ מִיֵּעוֹת אֶחָד מִיֵּעוֹת אֲלֵא, limitation, expressed in the Torah, it means that we should increase rather than decrease. Therefore, we repeat the word אֶךְ, meaning to increase our joy, and not to decrease it. This reminds us to be extremely happy on yom tov.

Or, it can be explained this way: אֶךְ is מִיֵּעוֹת, implying that we must know that even a tiny amount of joy is a worthwhile and great accomplishment.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* teaches that we read *Koheles* on Succos to remind us that joy isn't the product of *hevel havalim*, or frivolity. True *simchah* is when it is connected to Hashem, to His Torah, and His mitzvos.

### Luxuries

It states, *וה' ברך את אברהם בכל*, "Hashem blessed Avraham with everything." The Midrash says that *בכל*, "everything," refers to the mitzvah of *succah*. This means Hashem blessed Avraham with the mitzvah of *succah*, which is *בכל*, "everything." How is this mitzvah everything?

The Chozeh of Lublin (*Avnei Zikaron* 662) *zt'l* explains that the *succah* reminds us of the vainness of luxuries. During Succos, we live in a temporary hut for seven days, and all is fine and well. We discover that luxuries are not as essential as we thought they were. And when we know this, we have everything. Even if we have fewer physical possessions, we can be satisfied with our lot.

When we think we can't live without luxuries, we are never satisfied. Whatever we have, we need more. It is never enough. We need a renovated kitchen and a new car. When we make a *simchah*, we need to copy the wealthy, or it won't be good enough. We think that vacations must cost a lot of money, or they aren't enjoyable. This results in financial debt, and then with hard work to cover the expenses, which means less time for Torah and mitzvos, for things that truly matter. We are always unhappy because we feel that we don't have enough, yet. *Succah* is *בכל*, "everything." We attain awareness that we can have little, and yet have a lot in life.

It states (*Bereishis* 25:8): *ויגוע וימת אברהם בשיבה טובה זקן ושבע*, "Avraham passed away at an old age, old and satisfied." The Siforno translates *ושבע* as "He was satisfied with everything he desired to see and to do in his lifetime." This is a great and rare level. Rabbeinu b'Chayei writes:

"This *pasuk* reveals Avraham's good *middos*. He left this world feeling fulfilled. He didn't need more. This is unlike most people about whom it states (*Koheles* 5:9), *אורב, נסף לא ישבע כסף*, 'One who desires money will never have enough money.' And Chazal (*Koheles Rabbah* 1:32) say, 'When a person leaves the world, he hasn't attained half of what he wanted. If he has one hundred, he wants two hundred. If he has two hundred, he wants four hundred.'" But Avraham was satisfied and happy with his lot, and that is a wonderful and unique level. He attained this level because he was blessed *בכל*, with everything, which means he was satisfied with his portion.

Rebbe Yonason Eibshitz (*Yaaras Dvash* 6:1) writes, "For the person who fears Hashem, this idea doesn't only apply to Succos. Throughout the year, he will remember that life is temporary and that he's a guest in this world. And, therefore, he shouldn't build expensive houses decorated with gems and diamonds for his pleasure. This will cause him to desire more money, and to sin, and he will become a *baal gaavah* and forget Hashem Who created him. Remember Yonadav ben Rechav's precious, ethical will (see *Yirmiyahu* 35:6). He instructed his children not to live in houses, only in tents, one day here and the next day somewhere else. Our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov did that. They dwelt in tents, and they had long lives.<sup>20</sup> They didn't have to worry about

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Another approach is that *אך* is a limitation, which refers to when things aren't going well for a person. The Torah instructs us *והיית אך שמח*; even then, you must be happy.

20. Reb Yonason Eibshitz also notes that the Mishkan, made from *יריעות*, skins, and woven cloth, wasn't a permanent structure. Yet, it lasted 480 years. (including the years the Mishkan stood in Eretz Yisrael, until its final destination, in Nov and Givon). The Beis HaMikdash that Shlomo HaMelech built from stone and gold stood



fires burning down their castles. They didn't live with the fear of enemies, hunger, or plague. They could quickly undo the ropes of their tents and travel elsewhere.

"When Bilaam saw the Jewish nation dwelling in tents, he said, מַה טוֹבוֹ אֹהֶלֶיךָ יַעֲקֹב, 'How good are your tents.' 'Tents', in this pasuk, is intentional because we are a nation that dwells in tents... and that is good for us in this world and the next. But when we build houses of lime and stone, the stones will shout out all the sins of theft, pride, temptation, and desire. This is the lesson of the mitzvah of succah..."

### Unity

The Gemara (*Succah* 27) says, "All Yidden can dwell in the same *succah*." Literally, this means that a succah doesn't have to be yours. It doesn't have to be purchased with your money. You can perform the mitzvah of succah when you are in another person's succah, as well. However, there is a hint in the words: "All Yidden can dwell in the same *succah*." It is a hint to the unity of Klal Yisrael that we can attain on Succos.

When there is machlokes, people don't want to be under the same roof or sit at the same table. But on Succos, the Torah tells us, "All Yidden can dwell in the same succah."

This unity began on Yom Kippur. Sfas Emes (*Yom Kippur* 7651) writes, "On Yom Kippur, Bnei Yisrael become united. We are always united in the realm of the soul, and it is sin that separates us. On Yom Kippur, when our aveiros are forgiven, we become one." This oneness is experienced on Succos.

The Midrash (*Vayikra Rabbah* 30:12) teaches that the *esrog*, *lulav*, *hadasim*, and *aravos* represent all of Bnei Yisrael, from the tzaddikim (represented by the *esrog*) to those who are at low spiritual levels (represented by the *aravah*) and all Yidden in between. They are tied together. This means the *aravos* (the lower Yidden) must be close to the *esrog* (to the tzaddikim). Their connection with the tzaddikim grants them atonement. Tzaddikim need to be connected to the lower people because they aren't complete on their own. The *Beer Heitev* (645:9) writes, "אֶתְרוּגָּה is *gematriya* 610. When combined with the other three species, the *gematriya* is 613." Perfection is achieved when all four categories of Yidden unite.<sup>21</sup>

### The Mitzvos and their Meaning

The Gemara (*Succah* 3) requires that ראשו ורובו ושולחנו בתוך הסוכה, one's head, most of his body, and table be inside the *succah*. One cannot sit partially in the succah and mostly out of the succah. Even his table must be in the succah. The Sfas Emes explains this *halachah* to mean

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for less time – 410 years. The second Beis HaMikdash lasted 420 years, and during the 420 years, the Greeks ruled part of the time, and the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed several times. So, we see that a דירת ארעי, a temporary dwelling, can last longer than permanent structures. Similarly, he says, the *avos* had fewer luxuries in their lives, and therefore, they lived longer.

**21.** A rasha said to Reb Meir of Premishlan zt'l, "The Rebbe is like an *esrog*, and I am like the *aravos*. Both of us are needed. If someone buys the most precious *esrog* but doesn't have *aravos*, he cannot perform the mitzvah. So, what makes you better than me? We both need each other, and we are both lacking when we are alone!"

Rebbe Meir of Premishlan replied, "Certainly, we should unite together. That is the ideal situation, and that is what we do on Succos. However, when reshaim group together and distance themselves from the tzaddikim, this is like a bunch of *aravos* on Hoshana Rabah; we hit and bang them until their souls depart..."

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l notes that the *esrog*, which represents the tzaddikim, isn't tied together with the other species. They are held together for the mitzvah, and then they part ways. This hints that although tzaddikim should connect to others to elevate them, they should limit their interactions with people of lower levels, so that they won't learn from their ways.

that we must be immersed in the mitzvah, be happy with it, involved in it, and delve into it. One shouldn't physically sit in the *succah* with one's head and heart elsewhere. Even his table should be in the *succah*. The table represents the family. The head of the family should create a joyous atmosphere in the *succah* so his wife and children will also be enchanted and delighted with the Yom Tov and its mitzvos.

The Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah writes regarding the mitzvah of *succah*, "When a person learns about the greatness of this mitzvah and its great reward and about the seven exalted *Ushpizin* who visit him in the *succah*, he will yearn with all his heart for this mitzvah...because the mitzvah of *succah* is very great."

The Torah (Vayikra 33:42-43) writes, בסוכות תשבו שבועת ימים... למען ידעו... כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים, "For seven days you shall sit in the *succah*...to know that I had Bnei Yisrael sit in *succahs* when I took them out of the land of Mitzrayim."

This is one of the few times the Torah explicitly tells us the reason for a mitzvah. Hashem obligates us to sit in a *succah*, so we will remember that we sat in *succahs* when we left Mitzrayim. And since the Torah tells us the reason for the mitzvah, the Bach says we must have the reason in mind when we perform the mitzvah. It isn't sufficient to think, "This is Hashem's will, I am performing Hashem's mitzvah." That thought is adequate for most mitzvos of the Torah, but this time, the Torah requires us to think about the

reason for the mitzvah. To think about yetzias Mitzrayim, the miracles Hashem performed for us in the desert, and in particular, the miracle of the ענני הכבוד, clouds of glory that surrounded and protected us in the desert.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (625:1) writes, "When one sits in the *succah* he should think that [this mitzvah is to] remind us of *yetzias Mitzrayim* and to remember the ענני הכבוד, the clouds of glory, in which Hashem surrounded us in the desert to protect us from the elements. One should think about these thoughts, and in this manner, he will keep the mitzvah properly. However, *b'dieved*, one fulfilled the mitzvah even if he only had in mind that he is performing Hashem's mitzvah."

The Meiri writes, "A person who eats matzah on Pesach and sits in a *succah* on Succos is like a donkey that carries wheat during the wheat harvest and grapes during the grape harvest season...."

The Meiri teaches us that "time" shouldn't be the only reason we keep mitzvos. About this, it states (Tehillim 119) עת לעשות לה' הפרו תורתך, עבדך אני הבניי, "A time to do for Hashem; they have voided Your Torah." The Meiri explains: עת לעשות לד', when one keeps the mitzvos solely because the time has arrived for the mitzvah, הפרו תורתך, he transgressed the Torah, *chalilah*. עבדך אני, I am Your servant; therefore, הבניי teach me the reasons behind the mitzvos so that I can perform them correctly.<sup>22</sup>

**22.** Reb Eliyahu Lopian *zt'l* related a story that happened in his hometown:

A gentile child was murdered, and false witnesses testified that a Yid killed the child to use his blood to bake matzos.

The Yidden explained to the judge that these were false witnesses, and the judge suspected that it was so. However, even after cross-examining the witnesses, the witnesses stuck to their narrative. Without proof that the witnesses were lying, the lives of all Yidden in the area were in danger.

One wise Yid told the judge, "Nowadays, there is a new method to identify murderers. Modern courts use trained bloodhounds. The dog smells the victim's blood and can afterwards determine who the murderer is."

The judge agreed to use this test. The judge instructed everyone to gather in the town square. (The Yidden

### The Four *Minim*

The Beis Yosef (651) brings the following story:

"In a dream, the Rikanti saw HaRav Yitzchak Ashkenazi writing Hashem's name, but he wrote the final *heh* slightly apart from the first three letters. The Rikanti didn't know the meaning of the dream. The next day, he saw Rav Yitzchak holding the *esrog* apart from the *lulav*. Then, he understood the meaning of the dream. He told Reb Yitzchak Ashkenazi that the four *minim* represent the four letters of Hashem's name, and the *esrog* represents the final *heh*. One must hold them together so Hashem's name will be connected."

Holding the four *minim* is like holding Hashem's holy name in our hands. The רביד הנהג writes, "I heard from my holy Rebbe (Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz, zt'l) that the four *minim* are the four letters of Hashem's name. A person takes them in his hand and does with them as he desires."<sup>23</sup>

The Sar Shalom of Belz zy'a adds that this is the reason people use *koisheklach* (*lulav* holders) to hold the *lulav*, *hadassim*, and *aravos*. The *koisheklach* divide the three *minim*, to an extent. They aren't directly touching one another. This is because the four *minim* represent the letters of Hashem's name. Just as the letters of Hashem's name need to have a slight space between each of the letters, so, too, there has to be a division between the *minim*.

The Midrash (quoted in Ramban Vayikra 23:40) states: "The *esrog* is Hakadosh Baruch Hu, as it states... *Lulav* is Hakadosh Baruch Hu, as it states... *Hadassim* are Hakadosh Baruch Hu... The *aravos* are Hakadosh Baruch Hu..." Keviyachol, when we hold the four *minim*, we hold Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself. We don't know precisely what that means, but it reveals a drop of the holiness of the mitzvah and the privilege we have when we perform it.

Based on these ideas, Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz zy'a explains the *pasuk*, ה' לי לא אירא. He teaches, ה' לי, "Since Hashem is with me [as I hold the four *minim*] לא אירא, I have nothing to fear."

Reb Shimon Deutsch zt'l (Imrei Shefer) writes, "My teacher, the Chasam Sofer zt'l, would [hold the four *minim* throughout the entire *tefillah*]. He explained that he loved the mitzvah and that holding the four *minim* helped him daven with greater kavanah. The Chasam Sofer said he has more kavanah on Succos while holding the four *minim* than on Yom Kippur."

The Midrash teaches that the four *minim* represent the human body: The *esrog* represents the heart, the *lulav* the spine, the *hadassim* the eyes, and the *aravah* the mouth. The Chidushei HaRim zt'l says that when you want to awaken someone, you shake them. Similarly, we shake the four *minim* – which represents the human body – to awaken him to *ruchniyus*. We don't take the

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were also there, *Tehillims* in hand.) The judge had a dog smell the blood-stained clothing, and the dog led them directly to the true murderer.

No one was surprised because the murderer that the dog went to was renowned for his cruelty and dishonesty. This is how the Yidden of this town were saved from the blood libel.

Reb Elijah Lopian concluded, "The dog didn't know it was saving the Jewish community. It only knew how to smell the blood and go to the person with the same scent. However, when we perform mitzvos (succah, *lulav*, etc.), we should know what we're doing."

**23.** Chemdah Genuzah (vol.2 p.47) writes that the Ropshitzer Rav zt'l would say every year on Hoshana Rabbah, "People say: 'If I am holding you, that means I am stronger than you, and you must do as I say.' So, too, now that we are holding Hashem in our hands, keviyachol, Hashem has to listen to our tefillos."



four *minim* on Shabbos because Shabbos awakens us.

The Shevet Mussar explains that *yavesh* (dried-out *esrog* and *lulav*) is *pasul* because one needs to be fresh and alive when serving Hashem, not shriveled up and dry. As the Chidushei HaRim explained, this is the segulah of the four *minim* – to awaken us so we can serve Hashem with a *chiyus* and vigor.<sup>24</sup>

### Esrog

Tzaddikim have said that if people knew the value of the *esrog*, they would spend all the money in the world to acquire one.<sup>25</sup> The Gemara (*Succah* 41) tells us that Raban Gamliel once paid one thousand *zuz* for an *esrog*. "This teaches us how much they loved the mitzvos."

Until not very long ago, *esrogim* in Eastern Europe were extremely expensive because they had to be imported from Italy or other countries. In those days, there were only one or two *esrogim* per community, and they were expensive. Therefore, for months in advance, the Jewish community would save up money for this purchase, and they did it with joy, as they all wanted to keep this precious mitzvah.

One year, there were very few *esrogim* available on the market, so the Vilna Gaon *zt'l* gave a couple of his students a large sum of money and instructed them to seek an *esrog*.

The students searched hard and long until they finally found someone who had an *esrog*. The problem was that this man wasn't an *esrog* merchant, and he wanted the *esrog* for himself. The students offered him a lot of money, but he refused to part with his precious *esrog*.

They explained that they needed it for the Vilna Gaon. Finally, he agreed to sell it on condition that he would get the reward of the Vilna Gaon's mitzvah.

The students feared that the Vilna Gaon wouldn't be happy with this condition, but having no choice, they agreed.

The Vilna Gaon was very happy with the *esrog*, and he was also very happy with the deal they made. He explained that now he will perform the mitzvah entirely *lishmah* because he knows that he won't be receiving Olam HaBa for the mitzvah. His intention will be solely to make a *nachas ruach* for Hashem.

Reb Yonason Eibshitz's *zt'l* would spend a lot of money to purchase a beautiful *esrog*. His student, Reb Hirsch of Hessin *zt'l*, testified that Reb Yonason Eibshitz *zt'l* would buy an *esrog*, and if he found a more beautiful one, he would buy that one. And then, if he found an even more beautiful *esrog*, he would buy that one. His *succah* was also decorated with costly items. His students write, "All his money was valueless to him when it came to loving Hashem and His mitzvos."<sup>26</sup>

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24. The gematriya of חיים is לולב. The Maharil writes that this hints that when one buys a beautiful set of the four *minim*, he will merit life in this world and the next.

25. The Torah mentions *esrog* first, as it states פרי עץ הדר וכפות תמרים, etc., while the Mishnayos (*Succah* ch.3) mentions the laws of *esrog* last. Why did the Mishnah change the order?

Chazal tell us that the *esrog* represents the heart, the *lulav* the spine, *hadasim* the eyes, and the *aravos* the lips. The Mishnah reveals that if you want a pure heart, begin by being cautious with your eyes, speech, and deeds. Then, the heart will be pure, too.

26. Rebbe Moshe Lelover *zt'l* began his journey to settle in Eretz Yisrael during Elul. He brought along on the ship a shofar for Rosh Hashanah and the four *minim* for Succos. He also carried a large sum of money that his chasidim in Europe gave him to help him settle in Eretz Yisrael.

There are different versions of the following story. I will write it as I received it:

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchov *zt'l* was very poor, to the extent that his children went hungry. But there was one item of value in their home. It was an inheritance of the holy tefillin of Reb Michel Zlotchover's father, Reb Yitzchak of Derohovitz *zt'l*. His Rebbetzin *zt'l* often pleaded with him to sell the tefillin to support their family, but Reb Michel didn't want to do so. Once, a wealthy person came to Zlotchov and offered a lot of money for the tefillin. Rebbe Michel turned down the offer. "My father's tefillin aren't for sale," he explained simply.

One year, there were hardly any esrogim in Eastern Europe. An esrog merchant came to Zlotchov with an esrog and asked for a lot of money. Reb Michel sold the tefillin and bought the esrog for fifty *reinish*.

His Rebbetzin asked him how he had money to buy the esrog, but Reb Michel didn't respond. She asked again until he told her that he had sold the tefillin. She became angry and said, "I asked you to sell the esrog for our family, but you refused, and now you sold it?!" And with that, she bit into the esrog.

Rebbe Michel said, "Ribono Shel Olam! I don't have the tefillin anymore, and I don't have an *esrog* either. Should I also be angry?!"

That night, he saw his father in his dream. His father told him that he performed a great deed when he sold the tefillin to buy the esrog, but the second deed, that he controlled his anger, was an even greater accomplishment. His father said, "Your ability to control your anger was more precious in heaven than your *mesirus nefesh* to buy the *esrog*. Many *gezeiros raos* [harsh decrees] were annulled in the merit of your restraint."<sup>27</sup>

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They were still on the ship as Succos approached, and he noticed that his aravos had dried up. He asked the captain to stop at an island so he could cut some aravos off a tree, but the captain refused to stop. Why should he delay the entire ship just for one person who wanted willows? Rebbe Moshe continued to plead and offered him the money he had with him, an offer the captain couldn't refuse. With *mesirus nefesh*, he paid a fortune to keep the mitzvah of four minim.

When he arrived in Eretz Yisrael, he sent a letter to his chasidim in chutz l'aretz requesting money to settle in Eretz Yisrael. They were surprised because they had given him a nice sum before he left. After some inquiries, they heard what had happened. All the money in the world couldn't compare to his desire to do Hashem's will.

**27.** Back in the day, when esrogim were hard to come by and extremely expensive, community members would all chip in and buy one. The wealthier people were expected to contribute more than the less affluent individuals, but everyone had to contribute towards the purchase.

In one town, a particular wealthy person refused to contribute to the esrog fund. He thought, "Our wealthy rosh hakahal is wealthier than me. He will certainly cover the shortfall; why should I part with my hard-earned money?"

That is precisely what occurred. The wealthy rosh hakahal paid the difference, and the community bought an esrog. The four minim were kept in the rosh hakahal's home because he paid the lion's share of the purchase. Yom tov morning, the townspeople lined up in front of the rosh hakahal's house for a turn to shake the four minim. The wealthy miser was also in line. When it was his turn, the rosh hakahal refused to give it to him. He said, "We almost didn't have this mitzvah because of you. You don't deserve to use it."

The wealthy miser left the rosh hakahal's home ashamed.

Later that morning, the rosh hakahal walked to the beis medresh to daven shacharis, holding the four

בדרך צחות, the Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* explained what we gain by spending a lot on the four *minim*. He said that during the judgment on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Satan reads the *aveiros* of the Jewish nation. Malachim counter the Satan and say, "The Jewish nation isn't guilty of sins. You are guilty because you, the Satan, convince them to sin."

"It isn't my fault that they listen to me," the Satan replies. "They are a wise nation and should ignore my enticements."

"They aren't as wise as you think," the malachim reply. "Just wait a few days, and I will show you just how gullible they are."

A few days later, they buy an esrog, a citrus fruit with a retail value of a few cents, and they pay a fortune for it. The malachim say, "See how easily they can be tricked."

Thus, the Satan is held responsible for their sins, and the Yidden are inscribed for a good year.

The Berdichever Rav *zt'l* relates that he once met the Satan, and he asked the Satan why he appeared so sad.

The Satan answered, "A shipload of *esrogim* is arriving, and I'm very distraught about that. The Gemara (*Succah* 38.) says that when Yidden shake the four *minim*, it is like arrows in my eyes."

Sometime later, the Berdichever Rav found the Satan again, and this time, the Satan was happy. "Why are you so happy?" the Berdichever Rav asked. "Just a while ago, you were so sad. What happened?"

The Satan laughed and said, "I'm happy because the ship with the *esrogim* sank."

On Chol HaMoed Succos, the Satan was sad again. The Berdichever Rav asked him about that.

The Satan replied, "This year, most Yidden didn't shake lulav, but they all yearned immensely for the mitzvah, and their yearning was precious to Hashem. Additionally, a few Yidden bought *esrogim* at very high prices and rejoiced with the mitzvah. All these things combined (the desire, price, and the joy) are very precious to Hashem, even more than had all the *esrogim* arrived."

### The Four Minim Teach Us to Serve Hashem

The Sfas Emes (Succos תרל"ט) writes in the name of the Chidushei HaRim that ולקחתם לכם, means to take yourself to Hashem.

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabba 30:14) states, כל עצמותי תאמרנה ה' מי כמוך, 'All my bones shall proclaim, Hashem, who is like You?!' This refers to the four *minim*. The lulav represents a human being's spine, the *hadasim* represent the eyes, the *aravah* represents the mouth,

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*minim*. The wealthy miser ran over to the rosh hakahal in the middle of the street, shouted the brachos על נטילת לולב ושהחיינו, lifted the rosh hakahal and shook him in all six directions. He so desired to perform this mitzvah, and this was the closest he could get to it. When the rav of the community saw this, he asked the rosh hakahal to forgive him and to allow him to hold the *esrog* and *lulav* in his hands.

When the miser died, his deeds were weighed in heaven, and the scale tipped to the side of sin. One merciful *malach* said, "Did we place the mitzvah of the four *minim* on the scale?"

"We did," the court replied, "and we placed his shame on the scale, too (because he felt humiliated when the rosh hakahal turned him away), but it still wasn't sufficient. The scale was still tipped to the side of guilt."

The *malach* said, "We should add the weight of the rosh hakahal because he lifted the rosh hakahal to keep the mitzvah."

The rosh hakahal's weight was put on the scale, and the scale tipped to the side of virtue, and he was granted entry to Gan Eden.



and the esrog the heart." This means that the mitzvah of the four minim represents a person devoting all his limbs to Hashem's service.

The Chinuch elaborates: "The esrog represents the heart, which is the limb of the intellect. This tells a person to serve Hashem with his intellect. The lulav represents the spine, which is the primary part of a person. It hints that he should straighten out his body for Hashem's service. The *hadasim* represent the eyes, hinting that on a day of his celebration, he shouldn't stray after his eyes. The *aravos* represents the lips, hinting that... he should place a muzzle on his lips, and speak what he should, and he should fear Hashem on the day of his happiness."

The shofar is to awaken us from our dormant sleep, as the Rambam (Teshuvah 3:4) writes, "Although shofar is a *gezeiras hakasuv*, there is a hint in it. It is saying *עורו ישנים מתרדמתכם*, that those sleeping should awaken from their sleep... wake up and do teshuvah." But some heard the shofar and didn't wake up. The Beis Avraham said that when someone doesn't wake up from you calling them, you shake them, until they wake up. This is the idea of the shaking of the lulav.

Shofar didn't wake him up, but now he will wake up.

The Beis Avraham (ד"ה ולקחתם) said that the final letters of *עין הדר* spell *יצר*, the yetzer hara. The esrog is a *פרי עין הדר*, a beautiful fruit, yet there is the yetzer hara. The esrog represents the heart, the limb where the yetzer hara dwells. The heart is the root of all the struggles we have with the yetzer hara, the evil inclination. And this is the reason it is called *הדר*, beautiful. This is the factor that makes a *nachas ruach* before Hashem, above anything the *malachim* can achieve. For this is Hashem's will, that a person should have this constant battle and overcome the yetzer hara.<sup>28</sup>

When a person dances, he goes up and down. The Yeitav Lev (Yeitav Panim, Succos 42) said that at the dancing at the Simchas Beis HaShoeivah, people danced and jumped up, like they were trying to come close to Hashem, even though they knew that they would fall again. This is as the Zohar (Noach 69b) explains the pasuk (Tehillim 89:10) *בשוע גליו* "אתה תשבחם", "When the waves rise, you calm them." Chazal explain that each wave tries to go up and flood the world, but when it comes to the shore, it stops and calms down. Each wave sees the waves before it, how it

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**28.** Someone brought a beautiful esrog to (the first) Rebbe Shlomo of Bobov zt'l. It was perfect, without any faults. Rebbe Shlomo was impressed by the beautiful esrog, but he said that he preferred to use the esrog that he prepared before yom tov.

This was surprising to people. Why doesn't he want to use the more beautiful esrog?

The gabbai thought to himself, "If the rebbe won't be using the beautiful esrog, I will." When he took the esrog, he accidentally dropped it. When he bent down to pick it up, he saw that the pitum fell off, and that it had previously been attached with a pin. The esrog was *pasul* all along!

People in the beis medrash heard about this, and they were talking about the Bobover Rebbe's *ruach hakodesh*. He knew with *ruach hakodesh* that the esrog was *pasul*, and that's why he didn't want to use it.

The Bobover Rebbe, however, said that it wasn't *ruach hakodesh*. He realized that there must be some hidden blemish in the esrog, because externally, it was 100% perfect. The Rebbe knew that in this world there is no perfection, so if it was perfect on the outside, perhaps it was *pasul* on the inside.

We can learn an important lesson from this episode. The esrog represents the heart. One can expect that the heart won't be perfect. We came to this world to be tested, and there will be times when we find faults with our hearts, and that is precisely what makes us special. That is what gives our *avodas Hashem* its purpose.

failed to flood the world, but it tries again. The waves don't give up. They think that maybe this time they will succeed. אתה תשבחם, this attitude is a praise. It is the praise of the Jewish nation that doesn't give up, even after failing many times.

We wrote that the esrog represents the heart, and it is written in sefarim that also the lulav represents the heart. The letters of the lulav spell לו לב, "To Him is our heart." The lulav comes from a date tree. Chazal (Succah 45b) say, "Just as a date tree has one heart (the tree grows from one tall trunk), so is the Jewish nation. They have one heart for their Father in heaven."

וטהר לבנו לעבדך באמת is roshei teivos for לולב, "Purify our heart to serve You with truth."

The מהר"ם בריסק explained that the *hadasim* have three leaves on each level. Chazal call it תלת על תלת, three above from three. This alludes to two Mishnayos in Pirkei Avos that discuss three things to think about, to be saved from aveiros. The Mishnah (Avos 3:1) states: הִסְתַּגֵּל בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְּבָרִים וְאִי אֶתָּה בָּא לִידֵי עֲבֵרָה. דַּע מֵאֵן בָּאתָ, וְלֵאן אֶתָּה הוֹלֵךְ, וְלִפְנֵי מִי אֶתָּה עֹתִיד לֵתֵן דִּין וְחֶשְׁבוֹן, "Look at three things, and you won't come to an aveirah. Think about from where you come, where you are going to, and before Whom you will give a judgment."

It also alludes to the Mishnah (Avos 2:1) וְהִסְתַּגֵּל בְּשִׁלְשָׁה דְּבָרִים וְאִי אֶתָּה בָּא לִידֵי עֲבֵרָה, דַּע מַה לְּמַעְלָה מִמֶּנּוּ, מִמֶּנּוּ, עֵין רוּאָה וְאֵין שׁוֹמֵעַת, וְכָל מַעֲשֶׂיךָ בִּסְפָר וּבִקְטָבִין, "Look at three things, and you won't perform an aveirah: Know what is above you, an eye that sees, an ear that hears, and all your deeds will be written in a sefer."

## The Holiness of the Succah

Reishis Chachmah (Shaar HaKedushah ch.4) writes, "This was the custom of my teacher, the Remak. He wouldn't speak in the succah, other than divrei Torah, because the holiness of the succah is very great. The proof of this is the halachah regarding the walls and the schach of the succah. They have kedushah, and we are forbidden to derive pleasure from them all seven days of Succos" (see Shulchan Aruch 638:1).<sup>29</sup>

Mishnah Berurah (632:2) writes, "Since the kedushah of the succah is very great, it is proper that one shouldn't speak too much there, other than words of kedushah and divrei Torah. Certainly, he must be cautious that he doesn't speak *lashon hara*, *rechilus*, or other forbidden words in the succah."

Bikurei Yaakov (639:2) writes, "The Shlah was very strict that one shouldn't become angry in the succah."

Yesod Yosef (ch.77) writes, "When one sits in the succah and learns and davens there, he is literally in the upper worlds."

Sfas Emes (5643) writes, "Man was created to live in Gan Eden, which is the place of true joy, as we say (in the Sheva Brachos of a chasunah), בשמחה יצירך בגן עדן, 'As you made Your creation happy in Gan Eden.' Mankind was banished from Gan Eden, but there are times when a spark of Gan Eden shines [and one such time is when we sit in a succah]. This is why people are happy when they are in the succah. The succah is Gan Eden..."

Yaaras Dvash (vol.1 drush 6) writes, "Hashem's cloud hovers over the succah. Although we don't see it, it is certain that whoever sits in the succah *l'shem shamayim* and learns Torah there and is happy with

<sup>29</sup> The Rema (Orach Chaim 1:1) teaches, "The way a person sits, moves, and acts when he is alone in his home is different than how he will sit, move, and act when he is in the presence of a great king. [Also], the way he speaks freely with his family is different from how he will speak in the presence of a king." The Rema teaches that we must never forget that we stand before Hashem, and that will help us act and speak with yiras Shamayim at all times. This approach is especially applicable when we sit in the succah. We are sitting before Hashem, and we should act accordingly.

the yom tov and the mitzvos, Hashem's cloud hovers above him."<sup>30</sup>

It states (Shir HaShirim 1:4) הִבִּיאֵנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ חֲדָרָיו, "The king brought me into His [innermost] chambers. נְגִילָה וְנִשְׂמָחָה בְּךָ, "We will rejoice with You." There is joy in the succah. When we are in the Succah, we are in Hashem's innermost chamber, a place of immense joy. As Chazal (Chagigah 5:) say, after the churban Beis HaMikdash, Hashem cries in His outer chambers and is happy in His innermost chambers.<sup>31</sup>

There are several comparisons between the succah and the Beis HaMikdash.

The Pri Megadim states: One mustn't use a *succah* as a shortcut, and it is certainly forbidden to spit there because the *succah* is

holy and has laws similar to those of the Beis HaMikdash. Arizal teaches that one's table in the succah should have four legs to resemble the Shulchan of the Beis HaMikdash, which had four legs.<sup>32</sup> Chazal consider the possibility that a succah needs to be built on Har HaBayis, next to the Beis HaMikdash. This theory is disproved in the end. Nevertheless, a הוּא אֲמִינָה, an initial thought of Chazal, also has significance, and it points to the holiness of the succah. Its holiness is similar to that of the Beis HaMikdash, which is built on the Har HaBayis.

On the Friday night of Succos, some people don't say "Shalom Aleichem" (which is said before kiddush). Shem MiShmuel explains that the kedushah of the succah is so great, malachim cannot go there.<sup>33</sup>

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**30.** Keren L'Dovid writes, "When one sits in the *succah l'shem shamayim*, he feels the holiness with *hislahavus*. He experiences the light of the mitzvah and knows that it is true that the עֲנֵי כְבוֹד surrounded us. This sensation cannot be explained in words, but someone who experienced it knows it's true."

One of the laws of the succah is that it must be at least ten tefachim tall. The Gemara (Succah 4:) explains that this is because the Shechinah never descended below ten tefachim. The Chesed L'Avraham and the Sfas Emes (תרמ"ב ד"ה כתיב) say that this hints at the holiness of the succah, that the Shechinah resides above it.

According to halachah, a succah must be made of at least two complete walls and one smaller wall, the length of a *tefach*. The holy sefarim explain that this represents an arm, which is made up of two larger parts and a *tefach*, the hand. The walls of the succah signify that when we sit in the succah, keviyachol, it is like Hashem is hugging us.

Some tzaddikim were careful that a goy shouldn't enter the *succah* because of its great sanctity.

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l taught that Hashem tends to us during these days in the same manner as a mother cares for her child. On Rosh Hashanah, בְּלֹאזֶת מֵעַן אוֹנוֹ אֵפ, Hashem blows on us and blows away our impurities. On Yom Kippur, וּוָאֵשֶׁת מֵעַן אוֹנוֹ אֵפ, Hashem washes us, as it says, וּזְרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִיּוֹם טְהוֹרִים, "I will throw onto you purifying waters" (Yechezkel 36). And on Succos, דַּעֲקֵת מֵעַן אוֹנוֹ צִי, Hashem covers and swaddles us.

Similarly, the Ohev Yisrael (Likutim) says that a chicken first feeds its chicks and then covers them under its feathers. This is how the Shechinah interacts with us during these days. On Rosh Hashanah, Hashem gives us *parnassah*, and on Succos, Hashem takes us under His wings.

**31.** Rashi learns the opposite, that Hashem cries in the inner chambers and is happy in the outer chambers. Perhaps this can be compared to the Chovos HaLevavos (Prishus 4) הַפְּרוּשׁ צִהֲלָתוֹ בְּפָנָיו וְאֵבְלוֹ בְּלִבּוֹ, that a tzaddik, "The joy is on his face and his mourning in his heart." The joy is seen, but where it can't be seen, that is where Hashem has distress from the tzaros of Klal Yisrael. Our commentary above follows the view of Rabbeinu Chananel that Hashem's joy is in the inner quarters, and the distress of the Churban is expressed in the outer chambers. This is why there is judgment on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but when Succos comes, we enter Hashem's inner chambers, the place of Hashem's joy.

**32.** We repeat this, not necessarily so people should go out and buy a table with four legs, but rather to highlight the holiness of the succah, which resembles the Beis HaMikdash.

**33.** For those whose custom is to say Shalom Aleichem, inviting the malachim to the Shabbos night meal



Succos, we discuss praying in a loud voice, as we say in the Hoshanos (אום אני חומה) הושענא... השואנים הושענא "Hashem should save... those who shout out Hosha Na." Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we discuss prayers in a silent voice, as we say, וכל מאמינים, שהוא עונה לחש, "Everyone believes that Hashem answers silent tefillos." Rebbe Shalom of Belz zt'l explains that on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we should daven silently because we want to hide our tefillos from the malachim, the mikatrigim, who wish to capture our tefillos and prevent them from ascending to heaven. But on Succos, when we sit in the succah under the shade of the Shechinah, we are shielded from all the mikatrigim. Therefore, we can pray in a loud voice, we can shout הושענא, and our tefillos will go up and be answered.

When Yaakov Avinu escaped from Eisav, where did he go? The Zohar (vol.3 p.100:) states that he ran to a succah. The Bnei Yissaschar (Tishrei 10:7) writes, "With the *or makif*, the holy light of the succah, all tumah flee from him." It is a place of holiness and protection from all bad.

### Worthy to Be in the Succah

The Shem MiShmuel (5673) teaches that, although everyone sits in the *succah*, only those who are worthy can experience its great joy and holiness. The Shem MiShmuel

explains, "If the *succah* accepts the person, he will experience a good feeling while in the *succah*. But *chas veshalom*, if the *succah* doesn't accept him, he will not be happy there. If one enjoys sitting in the *succah*, it is a sign that the *succah* has accepted him. This can't be seen. It is the feelings of the heart and revealed only to Hashem." The Shem MiShmuel compares it to *teivas Noach*, which didn't accept the animals that sinned.

In the *yotzros* of the second day of Succos, we say, ואנכי היודע ועד כי עמי קיימו מצותיה, "I [Hashem] know and testify that My nation kept the mitzvah [of sitting in succah]." The Shem MiShmuel asks, why does Hashem need to testify? Isn't it something that everyone sees?

The Shem MiShmuel answers that it is visible that we kept the external aspect of the mitzvos. Hashem testifies that we kept the inner spirit as well. For example, as we sat in the succah, we experienced the joy and holiness of the *succah*.

The Shem MiShmuel adds that Succos comes right after Yom Kippur because one needs to be *tahor* from all sins to be spiritually accepted into the *succah*.

Nevertheless, let us encourage all those who don't yet enjoy being in the succah by letting them know that they, too, accomplish a great deal just by being there. Rebbe

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in the succah, there is a question of what to say first. Should he first say the Ushpizin, to invite the holy tzaddikim (אברהם, יצחק, יעקב, משה, אהרן, יוסף, ודוד) to the succah, or should he first say Shalom Aleichem, to invite in the malachim?

Someone told the Satmar Rebbe zt'l that he thinks we should invite the malachim first because the rule is תדיר ושאני תדיר תדיר קודם, whatever is more frequent comes first. Shalom Aleichem is recited every Friday night and should be said first.

The Satmar Rebbe replied that although Shalom Aleichem is said each week, however, different malachim come each week. This is because the level of malachim that come on Shabbos night depends on a person's deeds during the week and on the amount he prepared himself during the week for Shabbos.

Therefore, the Satmar Rebbe said that the ushpizin and the malachim are equally תדיר. The question thus remains who one should invite into the succah first, the malachim or the ushpizin?

The Satmar Rebbe said, "In my opinion, the ushpizin should be invited first because the ushpizin are tzaddikim, and tzaddikim are greater than malachim."

Avraham Yaakov of Sadigura zt'l said that this is why a succah is made from פסולת גורן ויקב, the leftover branches of the vineyard and the wasted stalks of crops (see Succah 12.). It teaches us that the succah is even for those who feel they are פסולת, leftover, and unimportant.

Chazal (Succah 22.) say המעובה כמין בית כשרה, if the schach on the succah is very thick and appears like a house, it is also kosher. Tzaddikim said that this alludes to the Yidden, who are מעובה כמין בית very thick, coarse, and *gashmiyosdig*. The succah is for them, too.

There was a chassid who was afraid to walk into the *succah*. He said, "The *succah* is filled with Hashem's names. How can I step on them?"

His Rebbe told him, "A Yid is also comprised of Hashem's names. *Sheimos* may go on top of *sheimos*."<sup>34</sup>

Rebbe Yechiel of Alexander zt'l said, "It is truly a wonder how one can enter a *succah*. But every Yid is a חלק אלוקי ממעל, a part of Hashem. Hashem's name is within him. Therefore, he may enter the *succah*."

The Torah says (*Vayikra* 23:42), בסוכות תשבו, "Dwell in the succos..." תשבו has the same letters as בושה, shame. The Yeitev Lev (*Yeitev Panim Succos* 10) explains that one should feel embarrassed to enter the holy *succah*. How

does he have the audacity to enter such a sacred place? The answer is that he can go there with thoughts of *teshuvah*. As the *pasuk* continues, כל האורה. The word האורה can mean "I will shine." I will do *teshuvah* so that I can sit in the succah. אורה is in the future tense, and it means "I will shine". He is saying, "Although I still have aveiros, I will do *teshuvah*, I will shine, and therefore, even now, before I do *teshuvah*, I can enter the *succah*."

The *pasuk* concludes, כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים, "I had Bnei Yisrael sit in *succahs* when I took them out of the land of Mitzrayim." When they left Mitzrayim, they weren't worthy either, but in the merit that they would receive the Torah in the future, they were able to sit in the *succah*. Similarly, because I plan to improve my ways, I have the right to be in the *succah*, even now.<sup>35</sup>

### Salvations from the Succah

Chazal say מצטער פטור מן הסוכה, meaning that when one has tzaar (discomfort or pain due to sitting in the succah), he is exempt from keeping this mitzvah. The Tiferes Shlomo taught that these words hint at one of the benefits we earn from keeping the mitzvah of succah. מצטער פטור, one becomes freed from his tzaros, מן הסוכה, when he performs the mitzvah of succah.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The Arizal teaches that Hashem's name is on every Yid's face. The two eyes of a Yid represent two י"ד s, gematria 20, and the nose is like a ו"ו, which is gematria 6; together, it is 26. So, he is sheimos, so he may walk on sheimos. But, b'derech tzachus, that is only when he is happy. When he is sad, he looks like he has a long nose, which is the final nun (נ), and then he doesn't have Hashem's name on his face anymore. Although this is written b'derech tzachus, and not to be taken literally, it is a reminder that atzvus and succah are two opposites, and don't mix well together.

<sup>35</sup> This is also hinted by the lulav, which we shake in all directions (see Succah 37:). We go up and down with the lulav, indicating that those who are low can rise high. We shake the lulav back and forth, מולך ומביא, suggesting that those who are מולך away from the kedushah, מביא, can return because, on Succos, everyone can return to Hashem.

<sup>36</sup> The Gemara (Succah 25:) says, מצטער פטור מן הסוכה, when one has tzaar, he is exempt from succah. The Kotzker zt'l explains that one shouldn't feel any tzaar or pain when he is in the holy succah, under Hashem's wings. If he feels distressed in the succah, פטור מן הסוכה, this demonstrates that he hasn't attached himself to the essence and holiness of the succah.

The Yeitav Lev zt'l said that even if the decree on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur was חייב, guilty, chas v'shalom, on Succos, the חייב can become roshei teivos for Tehillim 149:5) יִעֲלֶזּוּ חֲסִידִים בְּכָבוֹד יִרְנֶנּוּ, "The pious will exult in glory; they will sing praises..." Everything can turn around; there will be happiness, and good things will come to him. The judgment of Rosh Hashanah can become good for him, on Succos.

The end of the pasuk is יִרְנֶנּוּ עַל מִשְׁכְּבוֹתָם, בְּכָבוֹד, "...they will sing praises on their beds." The Sfas Emes (5653) says that this pasuk alludes to the עֲנַי הַכְּבוֹד, clouds of glory that protected Bnei Yisrael in the desert, and it alludes to the mitzvah of succah, which is in memory of the עֲנַי הַכְּבוֹד. He explains that

refers to the mitzvah of succah because that is the only mitzvah we perform when sleeping. It is called בְּכָבוֹד, for this mitzvah commemorates the עֲנַי הַכְּבוֹד. This mitzvah results in יִעֲלֶזּוּ חֲסִידִים, a lot of joy for the righteous because the mitzvah of succah results in salvations.

The mitzvah of succah is mesugal for a long life. The Ropshitzer Rav zt'l learned this from the pasuk (Vayikra 23:42) כָּל הָאֹרֶחַ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסֻּכּוֹת, "Every resident of Yisrael shall dwell in succahs." The word אֹרֶחַ is gematriya גְּבוּרָה, mighty, and the pasuk says (Tehillim 90:10) אִם בְּגִבוּרֹת שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה, that the mighty live up until eighty. So, there is an indication in the pasuk that for keeping the mitzvah of succah, one will merit to live long.<sup>37</sup>

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**37.** Reb Nota Freund zt'l of Yerushalayim told the following story, which he heard from the Tzelemer Rav zt'l.

The Tzelemer Rav was visiting a friend in a nursing home, and an old person approached him and asked to speak to him. The old man said that he was 116 years old and requested that the rav daven that he die.

The Tzelemer Rav said, "You appear healthy, with a sound mind; why do you want to die?"

The old man said, "My son is ninety years old. He is also here in this facility. But he suffers terribly. I can't bear to see his suffering. That's why I want to die and leave the world."

The Tzelemer Rav went to visit his son. He saw him lying in bed, in terrible pain. The son said, "I know I will live another four years."

The Tzelemer Rav asked, "How do you know that?" but the son didn't have the strength to answer. So, the Tzelemer Rav returned to the old father and asked for an explanation.

The old man said, "I lived in Kalamaya as a youth. When I turned twenty, I worked in the local post office, delivering letters. Soon, those in charge realized that I was strong, so they gave me the job of delivering heavy packages to their intended addresses.

"Erev Succos, I came to the post office, as I did every day, and I saw a package of sefarim for Reb Hillel Kalamaya zt'l. I understood that Reb Hillel might want to learn from these sefarim on Succos, so I immediately took the heavy package and brought it to Reb Hillel's home. When I got there, I saw that Reb Hillel was sad, which surprised me, since it was erev Succos, יָמֵן שְׂמֵחַתֵּנוּ! His succah was standing and decorated, he had the four minim, so I asked Reb Hillel why he was sad.

"He replied that he is afraid to sleep in the succah, because lately the local goyim were getting drunk and rowdy at night. His succah was centrally located, and many people passed it. He feared that the wild goyim might break into his succah in the middle of the night, and harm him..."

"I said, 'Reb Hillel! I am strong. I will sleep with you in the succah and protect you from the goyim.' Reb Hillel was delighted with this arrangement.

"I stayed in his succah the entire yom tov. I slept with a stick near my bed. On the first night, after we went to sleep, the goyim came to the succah. I chased them away. They returned the next night, and the night after that, but they received a beating from me each time, until they figured out they were better off



Yesod HoAvodah says that he will also merit health, as it states (Devarim 32:39) מְחַצְצֵי וָאֵי מְחַצְצוֹת, that with the מחיצות, the walls of the succah, there will be refuah.

The Kaf HaChaim (siman 621:6) teaches, "Whoever is cautious with the mitzvah of succah, to keep it properly, is guaranteed that there won't be disputes in his home throughout the year." Segulas Yisrael (מַעֲרַכַת י"ח) writes that learning masechta Succah, any day of the year, is mesugal to be saved from machlokes. The hint is (Tehillim 31:21) תִּצְמַח בְּסוּכָה מְרִיב לְשׁוֹנוֹת, "Protect them in a succah from the disputes of tongues." Reb Naftoli of Ropshitz zt'l would study masechta Succah throughout the year, and he said that it is mesugal for shalom bayis.

Learning masechta Succah is also mesugal for bringing Moshiach, as we say in the tefillah, יְפַרֵּשׁ ה' סוּכַת שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, that Hashem should bring peace to us, to all Yidden, and to Yerushalayim.

The mitzvah of succah is mesugal for parnassah. Tiferes Shlomo says that this is hinted at in the Mishnah (Succah 28.) מִי שֶׁהִיא רֹאשׁוֹ וְרַבּוֹ בְּסוּכָה וְשִׁלְחוֹ בְּתוֹךְ הַבַּיִת, "A person whose head and most of his body are in the succah and his table is in the home." Alluded to in

these words is that from the mitzvah of succah, he brings parnassah to his table in his home. Another indication is the Gemara (Succah 29), מִנָּח מִכֵּלָּא חוּץ לְסוּכָה, that also when the yom tov passes and he is חוּץ לְסוּכָה, outside the succah, he will receive מִכֵּלָּא, food, and parnassah because he performed the mitzvah of succah.

Sfas Emes (5637) says, "The mitzvah of succah brings blessings and a light of kedushah to the person's home."

Sfas Emes (5658) explains the brachah of Shemoneh Esrei, מֶלֶךְ מִמִּית וּמַחֲיָה וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה, as follows: מֶלֶךְ מִמִּית וּמַחֲיָה, "a King Who gives life and death," this occurs on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה, "He sprouts salvations," this happens on Succos because on Succos, salvations come, and the harsh gezeiros are ripped up.

### Salvations from the Four Minim

The Rosh (סוּכָה פ"ג כ"ו) quotes the Yerushalmi that when we shake the lulav during Hallel, it shakes and weakens the strength of the מַקְטָרִים, the malachim who speak against us. This is also taught in the Maharsha (Succah 38a).<sup>38</sup>

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not coming back anymore. There was peace and quiet for the second half of Succos.

"At the end of yom tov, Reb Hillel gave me a brachah that I should live until 120 years with good health, and that none of my children should die in my lifetime. As you can see, the brachah has come to fruition. My son apparently understood from this story that he has another four years to live..."

The Tzelemer Rav was very inspired by this story and told the old man not to daven to die. He should instead daven that his son should have a refuah sheleimah.

Before leaving the nursing home, the Tzelemer Rav spoke to the staff and asked them to contact him if anything changed regarding the old man's health. He also came and visited the old man from time to time.

Four years later, the home contacted the Tzelemer Rav to tell him that the old man was niftar. He was 120 years old. An hour afterwards, they informed him that the son was also niftar.

We learn from this story that (a) if you help others keep the mitzvah of succah, you can merit long life. (b) Have hakaras hatov for those who help you, especially those who help you perform the mitzvah of succah. (c) We also see from this story the power of the brachos of tzaddikim.

**38.** We can tell a mashal of a child who is playing on a pitched roof. He is unaware of the grave danger he is in, but others are aware. So they place cushions on the ground surrounding the house, and they call Hatzalah... Similarly, we are still in the midst of the awesome judgment of the new year (as we explain,

Rebbe Mendel of Riminov zt'l (מנחם ציון ראזין) teaches, "During Succos, we take the four minim, which are like brooms, and with them we sweep away all the resha'im of the world. For, in every generation, the seventy nations of the world are *mikatreig* against us. This is true, it is like I see it with my eyes. Every Yid creates the seventy nations, himself [with his aveiros], and we have to overcome them and negate them. Therefore, we take the four minim and we fight with the mikatrigim who cause us trouble. This is because the four minim are our weapons, as the Tikunei Zohar (29a) tells us. We wave the four minim back and forth so that wherever there is a mikatreig, who speaks against Yisrael, they will fall under our feet, and they will have no ability to stand.

The Beis Aharon (p.138) writes that ערבה is gematria 277 (זרע), to hint that the aravah – in the lulav and the Hoshanos on Hoshanah Rabba – are mesugal for bearing children. (The source is פרי עין חיים שער הלולב פרק ג', and the Imrei Pinchas (השלם תס"ה) adds a story about someone who told his wife to cook the aravos, see there).

Why is the aravah mesugal for bearing children? We can explain this with the Gemara (Taanis 2a) that the key for bearing children is in Hakadosh Baruch Hu's hands,

and He doesn't give it over to a shaliach. The aravah (and all the four minim) are similar, because they are entirely in Hashem's hands. The Bnei Yissaschar (Tishrei 10:24) writes from early kabbalah sefarim that although all plants have a malach over them, which hits them and helps them grow (see Bereishis Rabba 10:6), the four minim are entirely under Hashem's hands and hashgachah, and no malach is involved. Bnei Yisrael are told to take the four *minim* to show that they, too, are entirely under Hashem's hashgachah, and they are not under the influence of malachim. Chazal (Taanis 2a) say that bearing children is entirely in Hashem's hands. This helps us understand why the aravah should be mesugal for the barren to bear children.

The מהרי"ל (Hilchos Lulav) writes that לולב is gematria חיים, life. This hints that when one buys a beautiful lulav and esrog, he merits life in Olam HaZeh and in Olam Haba.

The Eliyahu Rabba (תרמ"ה א) writes that לולב spells לולב. He explains that ל"ו stands for the 36 tzaddikim in every generation, and the 36 masechtos in Shas. ל"ב stands for the Torah, which begins with a ב' and ends with a ל'. ל"ו is gematria חיים, which is Torah. He will merit children tzaddikim who have a לב, a heart for Torah.

### Hoshana Rabbah

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz zt'l said that Hoshana Rabbah can be translated in three ways, and they are all correct. (a) הושענא רבה means "The great Hashem should save us."

(b) הושענא רבה means Hashem should save the great Jewish nation.<sup>39</sup> And (c) הושענא רבה means that Hashem should save us with a great salvation.<sup>40</sup>

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Hoshanah Rabba is part of the process), but we aren't aware. We feel sure that all is well. Hashem tells us to shake the lulav. This annuls the mikatrigim and offers us protection. On Hoshanah Rabbe, we will receive a good judgment, with Hashem's help.

39. The Jewish people are called rabbah, great, as it states (Shemos 4:22) בני בכורי ישראל, "My firstborn son, Yisrael." So, Yisrael is the firstborn, the greater and older son.

40. The Gemara (Shabbos 31a) tells us the questions that are presented to a person after his passing. One of the questions, which the beis din of heaven will ask him is, צפית לישועה, "Did you anticipate salvation?" Literally, this means, did you wait for Moshiach? The Imrei Emes zt'l explains that צפית לישועה can mean did you wait and look forward to הושענא רבה?

We should look forward to this day because Hashem bestows salvation on Klal Yisrael on this day.

Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Tchortkov *zt'l* (whose *yahrtzeit* is on Hoshana Rabbah) said that Hoshana Rabbah means we will be saved in the merit of saying "Amen yehei shmei rabbah".<sup>41</sup>

The Divrei Yoel of Satmar *zt'l* would daven for a very long time on Hashana Rabbah. One year, Hashana Rabbah was on Friday, and the gabbaim announced that the women should go home to light Shabbos lecht, and they shouldn't wait until the tefillah was over, because it was almost Shabbos. At that time, the Satmar Rebbe shared the following mashal:

The people of a certain city committed a grave offense against the king, and they were all sentenced to death. They knew that every year, on a designated date, the king visited a garden in this city. The elders of the city decided that they would go to the garden on that designated day, meet with the king, and plead for mercy and forgiveness.

The elders assembled in the garden, and they waited for the king, but the king wasn't there! As the day was ending, many wanted to go home. Their plan had failed. One wise elder said, "The king's custom is to visit the garden today," he reasoned, "so he must be here, only he came disguised as a common citizen. Let's call out to the king and implore him to save us. He will surely hear us and forgive us."

The Satmar Rebbe cried, "We think the King is not here, but He is certainly present. If we cry out to Him, He will listen to our

tefillos. Let's raise our voices together and cry out, 'הושע נא והושיעה נא אבינו אתה!'"

### The Awesome Judgment

Hoshana Rabbah is a day of judgment. Everyone knows that Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are days of judgment, but the Kabbalah sefarim reveal that Hoshana Rabbah is also a day of judgment.<sup>42</sup> But since Shas and poskim hardly mention the judgment of Hoshana Rabbah, most people aren't aware of this aspect of the day.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt'l* explained that in the early generations, the fear of judgment was so great, if people knew that Hoshana Rabbah was a day of judgment, it would ruin their *simchas yom tov*. Therefore, the judgment was concealed from them so that they could perform the mitzvah of ושמחת בחגך, and it was only discussed in kabbalah sefarim. In later generations, the fear of judgment isn't as intense in people's hearts as it used to be, and therefore, more sefarim reveal to us that a tremendous judgment transpires on Hoshana Rabbah, as well. The events of the year are mainly dependent on this day.

Reb Shlomo Zalman adds that one aspect of the judgement on Hoshana Rabbah was known to the earlier *doros*. The Mishnah states, בחג נידונים על המים, "Succos we are judged for rain," and the Levush writes, "Therefore, people light more candles in the beis midrash on Hoshana Rabbah, similar to Yom Kippur because it is the final day of judgment for rain." It was always known that Hoshana

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**41.** Chazal say, "Whoever answers *Amen yehei shmei rabbah* with all his might, his judgment is ripped up." Reb Yochanan says, "Even if one has the sin of *avodah zarah*, he will be forgiven" (*Shabbos* 119).

During World War II, the Yidden of Yerushalayim made a *kabbalah* to improve how they say *Amen yehei shmei rabbah*. They began saying it with all their might and with a lot of *kavanah*. When the Nazi general, Rommel *ym's*, was in Mitzrayim, intending to bring his army to Eretz Yisrael, Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiler *zt'l* told his *gabai*, "I sense that the *resha'im* won't be able to conquer Eretz Yisrael because the Yidden improved how they recite *Amen yehei shmei rabbah*." And indeed, the Yidden of Eretz Yisrael were miraculously spared.

**42.** The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* said in the last year of his life, "I passed the judgment of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But I didn't pass the judgment of Hoshana Rabbah."



Rabbah was a day of judgment for rain. In later generations, it became known that it is also a day of judgment for all areas of life.

Reb Shlomo Zalman adds that in the past, rain meant life. If it didn't rain, people would die from thirst. Today, things have changed because water can be transported if needed. (The Chazon Ish ruled that we don't fast for rain anymore because a lack of rain isn't as tragic as it used to be.) Therefore, years ago, it was sufficient for people to know that they were being judged for rain, and this would arouse them to *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah*. Today, that isn't enough. Therefore, the sefarim revealed more details of the awesome judgment of this day.

Halichos Shlomo (Succos, p.241) brings down Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's customs on this day. "From the beginning of the night,

Reb Shlomo Zalman had immense fear, similar to the fear of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. From nightfall, he spent most of the night saying Tehillim with a lot of kavanah. When he got older, he would get out of bed several times to say Tehillim. He didn't appreciate it when people visited him on the night of Hoshana Rabba. If someone would come, he would speak with him very briefly, and as soon as the conversation was over, he returned to his Tehillim."

Two yungerleit were talking on Hoshana Rabbah night in the beis medresh of Reb Avraham Elimelech of Karlin zt'l. The Rebbe rebuked them, "I am certain you have something very important to discuss because otherwise you wouldn't discuss it tonight. However, you would have been better off discussing these matters during Kol Nidrei than speaking on this holy night."

### *Shemini Atzeres*

The Midrash says that after seven days of Succos, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, קשה עלי, פרידתכם, "It is hard for Me when you leave," and Hashem asks us to stay one more day. The Imrei Emes writes that the feeling should be mutual, and Bnei Yisroel should also feel that it is difficult to part from the Yomim Tovim.

The Rema MiPano teaches that the literal translation of חג is a circle. All yomim tovim are a chag, a circle, surrounding a primary, focal point. The focal point is Shemini Atzeres. This is the reason, according to some opinions and siddurim, Shemini Atzeres isn't referred to as a חג (see *Shulchan Aruch* 668). All yomim tovim are a חג, surrounding this special day, which stands in the middle.<sup>43</sup>

It states in Mishlei ליום הבושח ותשחק ליום אחרון. The Vilna Gaon zt'l explains: עו is Rosh Hashanah because Hashem judges us with His might. והדר refers to Succos, the day we take a פרי עץ הדר. And then comes Shemini Atzeres, ותשחק ליום אחרון, a day of immense happiness.

The Gemara (*Taanis* 7) discusses גדול יום הגשמים "How great is the day it rains!" The Avodas Yisrael zt'l says that the Gemara refers to the greatness of Shemini Atzeres, the day we daven for rain.

The Chasam Sofer zy'a teaches that Shemini Atzeres is greater than Yom Kippur because Yom Kippur is to love Hashem through affliction (fasting, etc.). Shemini Atzeres is to love Hashem through joy, which is a more ideal way of connection, as it states (Shir HaShirim 7:7) מזה יפית ומה נעמת אהבה בתענוגים

<sup>43</sup>. At a chasunah, there is a chuppah, dancing, and a meal, but the purpose of it all is for the chasan and kallah to go home and build a home together. The Sfas Emes says that the yomim tovim represent various stages of a chasunah. For example, the *schach* on the *succah* resembles the chuppah. After the chuppah is the *yichud*, which is an even greater unity. That occurs on Shemini Atzeres.

"How beautiful it is when the love is with pleasure and joy."

The Chinuch <sup>(324)</sup> writes that we don't take the four *minim* on Shemini Atzeres because the four *minim* remind us to direct our joy (of gathering the crops) to Hashem. On Shemini Atzeres, we don't need reminders because, *יום השמיני כולו לה'*, "The eighth day is solely for Hashem." We don't need any reminders on this day. It is a day we are solely and entirely with Hashem.

The Yesod Yosef writes, "The custom is to take all the *sifrei Torah* out of the *aron kodesh*... Because when a father loves his son, he opens all his treasures for him and doesn't withhold anything. Similarly, Hashem bestows upon us immense goodness."

The Zohar states, "On Hoshana Rabbah, the judgment is completed, and the blessings begin. On the following day (Shemini Atzeres), the Jewish nation celebrates with the King and receives blessings for the entire year. It is only the Jewish nation that is present at that celebration. And when one sits alone with the king, whatever he asks will be granted."<sup>44</sup>

Reb Chaim Palagi *zt'l* teaches, "Be extremely careful with the *tefillos* of Shemini Atzeres to say them with immense *kavanah*...

There is no better day and greater *eis ratzon* than this day, when Hashem desires to hear our *tefillos*.... Everything depends on this day."

The Kotzker *zt'l* said that on Shemini Atzeres is the *gzar din* (the decree) for *parnassah*. His son, Rebbe Dovid *zt'l*, used to daven *b'yichidus* (by himself). On Shemini Atzeres, the Kotzker called for him and said that on Shemini Atzeres, it is important to daven with a *minyan* because, on this day, it is decreed how much *parnassah* one will receive in the coming year. This is hinted at in the words *והיית אך שמח*. The final letters of *והיית אך שמח* spell *חתיך*, the name of the *malach* appointed over *parnassah*, and Chazal tell us that these words refer to Shemini Atzeres.

Reb Aharon Chernobyler *zt'l* said that *benching* *גשם* on Shemini Atzeres is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.

The Rayatz of Lubavitz *zt'l* said in the name of his father, the Rebbe Reshab *zt'l*, "We must cherish the forty-eight hours of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah. Every moment of these days, we can fill buckets with *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus*. We receive this bounty due to the dancing. (Sefer Maamarim 5711, p.79).<sup>45</sup>

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44. The final words we quoted reveal the unique strength of *tefillah* on Shemini Atzeres. "When one sits alone with the king, all his requests are granted."

45. The Rayatz *zt'l* of Lubavitz said that during the *hakafo*s, one can ask for great things, and his *tefillos* will be answered. When we dance with the Torah, we are demonstrating our love for Hashem and His Torah, as we say in the *Hoshanos*, *הבוקה ודבוקה בך*, "hugging and connected with You". On Succos, someone holds the *sefer Torah*, and the congregation holds the four *minim* and circles the *sefer Torah* and the *bimah*. On Simchas Torah, we show a higher level of connection to Hashem because people hug the *Sefer Torah* and dance with it around the *bimah*.

Buying on credit is called *הקפה*. When a storeowner trusts his customer to take merchandise and pay later, this is called *הקפה*. The Rayatz explains how this applies to the *הקפות* of Simchas Torah. He explained that a storekeeper will only extend credit to customers he trusts and who are able to pay up. If he suspects they won't pay, he won't sell them on credit. The dancing on Simchas Torah is called *הקפות*, because, on Simchas Torah, Hashem gives us salvation and many *brachos*, on account of our future good deeds. On this day, Hashem relies on us that we will pay up our debts, so he gives us on loan. [It seems that this is because Simchas Torah is after the *Yomim Noraim*, and every *Yid* was inspired to do *teshuvah*. Therefore,

## Simchas Torah

*Yesod VeShoresh HaOvadah* (ch.16) writes, "Whoever is happy with the Torah on this day, he is guaranteed that his children and descendants will always be Torah scholars."

The Shalmei Chagigah (p.292: printed year תק"ג) writes, "Fortunate is the person who rejoices with the Torah on Simchas Torah, for this will rectify his soul for the times that he disgraced the Torah. Additionally, there's a guarantee from early scholars that whoever is happy with the Torah on this day will have offspring who will always study the Torah. There was a Rav who was very happy on Simchas Torah, and his descendants were renowned scholars for three consecutive generations. Everyone knew it was because of his happiness with the Torah on Simchas Torah. He rejoiced and danced with the Torah in a way that wasn't done by other rabbanim and gedolei Yisrael. Despite his prestigious Rabbinic position, he would jump and dance before the Torah and encourage others to do the same." In this merit, he merited children and grandchildren, exceptional talmidei chachamim.

The Shaar HaKavanos writes, "My teacher (the Arizal) went around the bimah... danced and sang with all his strength. Then, on *motzei yom tov*, he went to several batei

midrashim to dance with the Torah (called in Eretz Yisrael עזרת רגל), and this lasted many hours."

Maaseh Rav states that the Vilna Gaon zt'l "would go before the sefer Torah with immense joy, his face was like a burning fire, and he would clap and dance with all his might before the Torah."

The Satmar Rebbe zt'l danced with all his strength on Simchas Torah, although he was weak. When people questioned him about this, he replied, "Chazal (Succah 48.) say, שמיני עזרת רגל בפני עצמה היא." 46 On Shemini Atzeres, everyone receives another רגל (foot) to help him dance.

Dancing with the Torah on Simchas Torah is mesugal for having children. The Yismach Yisrael zt'l learns this from *Michal*, who was upset with her husband Dovid Hamelech when she saw him dance with all his might before the aron hakodesh (see Shmuel 2, 16:23). She was punished that she couldn't bear a child. We understand from this that when one does the opposite and is happy with the Torah, he will be rewarded with children. 47

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l said in his father's name, Rebbe Shalom of Belz zt'l, "I can't tell you what the hakafos are about. But I can tell you this: All tefillos that didn't

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we now have good credit, and Hashem will give us salvations and brachos, for which we will pay with our good deeds throughout the coming year.]

**46.** Literally, this means Shemini Atzeres is its own holiday, not a continuation and final day of Succos.

**47.** It is brought down in the Shivchei HaBaal Shem that one Simchas Torah, the students of the Baal Shem Tov zy'a were dancing joyously, and one of the poorer students left the holy dancing, and disappointedly, sat on the side. He couldn't continue dancing because his shoe ripped. Udl, the Baal Shem Tov's daughter, noticed what happened and told the student, "If you will guarantee me that I will bear a son this year, I will get you a pair of new shoes." (She had shoes in her store.) The student gave his word. She immediately went and brought him the shoes. That year, she gave birth to the great tzaddik, Rebbe Boruch'l of Mezhibuzh.

A member of our *chaburah* didn't have children. One Simchas Torah, he danced with all his might with the Torah, and nine months later, he had his first child. The following Simchas Torah, he did the same, and once again, nine months later, he had his second child. He had a friend who also didn't have children. When the friend heard that his friend had two children in the merit of dancing with the Torah, he wanted to do the same. He was embarrassed to dance with all his might in the beis medresh where he usually davens, so he went to an old-age home where no one recognized him, and he danced up a storm and honored the Torah immensely. Nine months later, his first child was born.



go up the entire year, go up during the *hakafos*." This is hinted in the words פז"ר <sup>48</sup>קש"ב, which can mean פז"ר, the tefillos that were scattered and didn't go up, קש"ב, on Shemini Atzeres, Hashem listens to those tefillos.

The Minchas Elazar zt'l (Shaar Yissaschar, Zman Simchoseinu 17) writes that the Baal Shem Tov zt'l said, quoting Eliyahu HaNavi, that whoever davens with kavanah on Hoshanah Rabba, Shemini Atzeres, and Simchas Torah, he will be able to have kavanah the entire year.

The Beis Aharon zt'l (Pesach p.94.) writes, "Dancing on yom tov is the highest form of tefillah... for it is a prayer with כל עצמותי, all one's limbs."

The Ateres Yehoshua (ד"ה במאמרים) explains the Mishnah (Negaim 12:1) בית עגול אינו מטמא בנגעים, that due to the עגולים, our dancing on Simchas Torah, all plagues and troubles go away.

The Chida teaches that by dancing on Simchas Torah, we knock down the iron walls that separate us from Hashem.

On Simchas Torah, we read the Parasha of וזאת הברכה, the brachos Moshe gave Bnei Yisrael, and as we read them, we receive those brachos again. Rebbe Henoch of Alexander zt'l said this is why *birchas kohanim* isn't performed on Simchas Torah. We are

receiving Moshe Rabbeinu's brachos, so we don't need any other brachos.

### Peace on Simchas Torah

The Ruzhiner zt'l (Irin Kadishin, Shemini Atzeres) teaches that peace is essential on Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah. He points out that, very often, disputes and machlokes break out on Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah. This occurs in all places, and the effort the yetzer hara invests to make machlokes is an indication of the importance of peace on this day.

The Gemara (Shabbos 31a) tells that someone came to Hillel and asked that he convert him while standing על רגל אחת, on one foot. Hillel told him, "What you hate done to you, don't do to others." The holy Ruzhiner explains that רגל אחת alludes to Shemini Atzeres, which is called רגל בפני עצמו, its own holiday. So, in other words, this convert asked Hillel to teach him the secret of Shemini Atzeres. Hillel told him to be cautious with hatred and machlokes. "What you hate being done to you, don't do to others."

Therefore, during the *hakafos*, one has to be extra cautious to honor everyone, and not to chas v'shalom cause distress to anyone. The reward of the *hakafos* could be lost due to this severe aveirah.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup>. The Gemara (Succah 48a) writes the words פז"ר קש"ב in relation to Shemini Atzeres. The six letters are the roshei teivos of the six factors that separate Shemini Atzeres from Succos.

<sup>49</sup>. Someone asked the Chofetz Chaim zt'l for the deep meaning and purpose of the *hakafos*. He replied, "When you are dancing with the talis over your head, be cautious that you don't step on another person's foot, because you won't even know who it was to ask him for forgiveness. This is the סוד ההקפות, the deep secrets of the *hakafos*."

One year, on Simchas Torah, Russian soldiers arrived in Zvhil. Among the troops were many Jewish soldiers, and they needed food and drink. Rebbe Shlomke – who was in his final years that he lived in Zvhil – told the chasid Reb Yosel Koz'lik zt'l, "Take this sack and go around to the Jewish homes, to collect food for the Jewish soldiers." Reb Yosel said that he would do so immediately after the *hakafos*.

Rebbe Shlomke replied, "The Torah will rejoice even if you aren't here, but the soldiers are hungry now!" Reb Yosel followed his rebbe's orders, and he immediately went to gather food for the soldiers.

Rebbe Shlomke's face lit up when Reb Yosel returned with the sack filled with food. Rebbe Shlomke took the sack on his shoulders and danced *hakafos* around the bimah with it. This stemmed from his deep love

## After Simchas Torah

Reb Chaim Palagi (*Sefer Chaim siman 36*) writes, "It's the custom of chassidim to be cautious with their thoughts, speech, and deeds during the twelve days [following Simchas Torah], for they correspond to the twelve months of the year. The righteous stay home on these twelve days, and they review what they studied. This is a great *segulah* to receive Hashem's *siyata dishmaya* every day of the year – from the beginning of the year until the end. He will succeed with everything he does, whether in Torah, chassidus, or business."

In the Yom Tov *tefillah* we say, 'והנחילנו ה', אלקינו...מועדי קדשך, "Hashem gave us as an inheritance...the holy *yomim tovim*..." An inheritance, the Sfas Emes said, is something that remains forever. It isn't something that leaves after a few days. So too, the holidays should always stay with us, even after the holiday is over.

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and devotion to his brethren.

One time, after the hakafof were completed in the beis medresh of the Maharil Diskin zt'l, the Maharil Diskin requested that they conduct another seven hakafof. Everyone was surprised; nothing like this had ever occurred before. Later, his son said that he asked his father for an explanation. The Maharil Diskin told him that there was a talmid chacham in the beis medresh, whom they had forgotten to honor with a hakafof. The Maharil Diskin realized that this was a disgrace for the honor of a talmid chacham, so he decided to repeat the hakafof, and during the second set of hakafof, he was able to honor this talmid chacham properly. This was a clever way out of a difficult situation. Sometimes, asking forgiveness for not honoring someone would only make matters worse. So, without any words, he conducted more hakafof and was thus able to honor the talmid chacham properly.

Imrei Pinchas (Shaar 4:4) tells: One year, before the hakafof of Simchas Torah, Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer zt'l told his student, Rebbe Refael of Bershad zt'l, "Until now, we did hakafof with weapons in our hands. These were the four minim (when we circled the bimah with the four minim). They are a mitzvah, and the Zohar calls them weapons. But now we're doing hakafof empty-handed. Although we will be carrying the holy sefer Torah, it isn't a mitzvah to hold, in the manner that it is a mitzvah to hold the four minim. Tell me, Refael. How does it look to perform hakafof empty-handed? How can we make hakafof in this manner? The answer is that a person should become holy like the four minim. His heart should become like the esrog, his spine like the lulav, his eyes like the hadasim, his lips like the aravos, and then he can take the sefer Torah and dance with it."

Rebbe Refael of Barshid began to cry when he heard this because he felt that he wasn't on this level. Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer calmed him, "Don't cry, Refael. I will carry you on my shoulders."

In other words, in Reb Pinchas Koritzer's merit, his student Reb Refael can dance with the Sefer Torah, and it will be like the four minim are holding the Sefer Torah.

A chassid of the Beis Aharon of Karlin zt'l returned home after spending a *yom tov* with his Rebbe. People asked him, ווי אזוי איז, "How did the *yom tov* pass?"

The chassid replied, די י"ט איז נישט אריבער, די, "The *yom tov* didn't pass, it entered." The *yom tov* became part of him.

Once, after *yom tov*, Rebbe Dovid of Tolna zy'a asked one of his chassidim how he planned to get home. The chassid replied, "The goy that drove me here will take me back."

The Rebbe said, "You're returning with the same goy?" We shouldn't go back after *yom tov* with "the same goy" that arrived. The *yom tov* should change us; we should become new people.

There's a *tefillah* one recites when he *gezegens* (takes leave) from the succah (on Shemini Atzeres, or in Eretz Yisroel, on Hoshana Rabba). It is printed in many siddurim and machzorim. In this prayer, we say, "It shall be Your will

that the malachim associated with the succah and the four minim should come with us into our homes..." We don't leave the mitzvos behind. We take the blessings and spirituality we gained from these mitzvos to our homes, and we keep them for the entire year.

The *piyut* of Shemini Atzeres (מערבית לשמ"ע) states, פונים מסוכה לביתם לישב צקון לחשם הקשב, "For those who leave the succah [on Shemini Atzeres] to return to their homes, listen to their prayers."

The Shinover Rav *zt'l* asks: Wouldn't it be more appropriate for the *piyut* to write, "Listen to the *tefillos* of those who *dwelled* in a succah"? Why do we pray that Hashem should listen to the *tefillos* of those who *leave* the succah?

The Shinover Rav *zt'l* answers that we ask Hashem to listen to the prayers of those who take the lessons and kedushah of the succah with them. The yom tov is over, people leave the succah, but they remain with the kedushah. They bring it to their homes.

The Gemara (*Gittin* 56) defines a בריה קלה as "an insect that eats but does not produce waste". Or, in other words, קלה means to take in and not give out. The Gemara (*Avodah Zorah* 3) refers to *succah* as a מצוה קלה, a light and easy mitzvah. Reb Avraham Yehoshua Freund of Nasod *zy'a hy'd* explained that *succah* is called מצוה קלה because one should take in the light and holiness of the *succah* and never let it leave him.

Chazal (*Succah* 28:) note that the two words בסוכות תשבו are opposites, because סוכות is a temporary dwelling and תשבו means to live permanently. Chazal answer that this הקש (juxtaposition of two ideas) teaches us to live in the succah in a permanent manner. The Gemara explains, "If he has beautiful vessels or sheets, he should bring them to the succah. He should eat and drink and spend time in the succah..." He should live in his temporary abode in a permanent manner.

Based on the concept of אין הקש למחצה, when two ideas are juxtaposed in the Torah,

the *drashah* goes both ways, the Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* taught that we should also live in our homes as we lived in the succah. Many attained holy and uplifting thoughts and actions when they performed the mitzvah of succah. They should live in their permanent homes in the manner that they lived in the succah.

It states (*Tehillim* 60:8) ועמק סוכות אמדד. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* says that סוכות אמדד refers to the measurements of a succah, which equal 360 tefachim (as we will explain). 360 is also approximately the number of days in a solar year. ועמק סוכות אמדד implies that the measurements of the succah spread holiness to the entire year. Each day of the year receives sanctity from the mitzvah of succah.

How does a succah have 360 tefachim? Also, why does the succah hint to 360 days and not to a full year of 365 days?

Let us first answer the first question. How do we know that a succah is 360 tefachim? We are calculating the height of the tallest succah, which is twenty amos high. Each amah is six tefachim, so  $20 \times 6 = 120$ . A succah needs three walls, so the equation is  $20 \times 6 \times 3 = 360$  tefachim, indicating that the succah brings kedushah to the 360 days of the year.

Five days are missing from this number because five days a year can exist without the kedushah of succah. These are the five days between Yom Kippur and Succos. On these days, we have atonement from all our aveiros, and therefore, these days don't need to receive the kedushah from the succah.

These ideas are alluded to in the pasuk we mentioned. It states דיבר בקדשו אעלוה אלקים דיבר בקדשו אעלוה. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* translates it to mean, אלקים אעלוה, Hashem says, אעלוה ה', I rejoice with the five days from Yom Kippur until Succos. אעלוה ה', and I divide these five days ש"ם, from the 360 days of the year. (ש"ם is gematria 360.) They are not calculated like the rest of the year, because on these days we are clean from all aveiros. עמק סוכות אמדד, I measure the



measurements of the succah, and they are 360, indicating that from the succah comes holiness for the entire year.

Rebbe Yissacher Dov's son, Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l*, added that this is the intention of the *pasuk* (Tehillim 39:6), הֵנָּה טַפְחוֹת נִתְּתָה יָמַי, the days of the year receive their spirituality from טַפְחוֹת, the *tefachim* of the *succah*.

The Dubno Magid related the following *mashal*:

A king had an only daughter, whom he loved immensely. When the time came for her to get married, a matchmaker proposed, "I have an ideal match for your daughter. He lives far away, but he is a prince; his father is a great king. He is wealthy and possesses all the qualities one could desire."

The king agreed to the match, and his daughter got married. Not long after the wedding, the groom expressed his desire to live in his homeland. His wife didn't want to move so far away from her father, but it meant a lot to her husband, so she consented.

Upon arriving in the foreign land, she discovered that the matchmaker had deceived them. Her husband was not a king's son, nor was he affluent. It was all a charade.

To make matters worse, her husband was cruel to her. He didn't conduct himself like a prince, raised with good manners. He behaved like the crudest, most unrefined individual.

One day, they received a letter from the king. He wrote, "I miss you very much, and since I see that you aren't visiting me, I've decided to undertake the long journey to visit you," and the king wrote the day he expected to arrive.

The husband hired a crew of workers to clean and decorate his house to make it appear like the home of a prince. He also began treating his wife well, so the king wouldn't suspect anything was the matter.

The king arrived and was very happy with what he saw. He felt that he had selected the perfect husband for his daughter.

As the king prepared to return to his palace, his daughter realized that this was her last chance to reveal the truth to her father. When they were alone, with tears streaming down her face, she revealed to her father that her husband was not a king's son and had been treating her cruelly.

The Dubno Magid's *mashal* ends here, but some add in one more line:

The king told his daughter, "I will live in this city, close to you, and then your husband will always treat you well."

The Dubno Magid explains that when Rosh Chodesh Elul arrives, *keviyachol*, Hashem announces that He will visit us during the days of judgment. Throughout Elul, people are busy cleaning up their deeds, so the King shouldn't realize anything is amiss. The body makes peace with the *neshamah*, to conceal from the King what is really going on throughout the year.

But then we reach *Ne'ilah*, and the King is about to leave. The Yid cries to Hashem and says, "I suffer so much from my body. When You visit, the body acts nicely to me, but now that You're about to leave, I must tell You that the body is cruel to me and tries to draw me to sin..."

As we wrote above, some add to the *mashal* that the king found a solution for his daughter. He would live near his daughter, so his son-in-law would always be kind to her. We add that this is the reason we have Succos after Yom Kippur. Hashem tells us, "Build a *succah*, and I will live together with you. In my presence, the body won't disturb you. And even after yom tov, you can take the atmosphere of the yom tov with you, and I will remain with you. In My presence, the body will not prevent you from serving Hashem."