

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
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*Succos*





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## Succos

One of the mitzvos of Succos is *simchah*: to be happy and to bring joy to others. As it states, *ושמחת בחגך אתה, ובנד ובתך... והיתום והאלמנה אשר בקרבך והיית אך שמח*, "Be happy in your holiday, you, your son and daughter... the orphan, widow that lives among you, and you shall be very happy" (*Devarim* 16: 14 – 15).

The Rambam writes "There is a mitzvah to be happy on all holidays, but there is special importance to being happy on Succos, as it states, *ושמחת לפני ה' אלקיך שבעת ימים*, "rejoice before Hashem your G-d for seven days" (*VaYikra* 23).

As it states in *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 529:2)*: "A person is obligated to be happy and in a good mood on Yom Tov, him, his wife and children and everyone who is associated to him (וכל הגלויים עליו). How? Hand out nuts and roasted grains to the children. [Today, this means to give candy/nosh to children.] For the women, buy clothing and jewelry, according to your abilities...."

We aren't able to measure the value of mitzvos. Perhaps the mitzvah to be happy on Succos is just as important as *lulav* and *succah*. Perhaps *simchah* is the greatest mitzvah of this holiday? We

don't know, but what we must know is that being happy on Succos isn't merely a good idea, a chassidic concept, a proper attitude, etc., but an obligation from the Torah.<sup>1</sup>

When the first day of Succos is on Shabbos, the mitzvah of *lulav* is *דרבנן*, while the mitzvah of *simchah* is from the Torah. In a year when the first day of Succos is Shabbos, it is certain that the mitzvah of *simchah* has precedence over the four *minim*.

Someone was spending a lot of money on the four *minim*. A scholar told him, "You're busy with a mitzvah *derabanan*, and I'm busy with a *de'oraysa*," as that year the first day of Succos was on Shabbos, and *lulav* was a *derabanan*, while buying jewelry for his wife was a mitzvah from the Torah.

The Beis Aharon (p.156) teaches, on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur the way to connect to the holiday is through fear, and on Succos we connect to the *yom tov* through joy.

### The Hardest Mitzvah to Keep

Being happy on *yom tov* isn't an easy mitzvah. The Vilna Gaon said that it is the hardest mitzvah of the Torah — especially since this mitzvah is for seven days.

1. The Imrei Noam noted that the mitzvah of *lulav* is only for one day (as it says, *ולקחתם לכם* ביום הראשון) while the mitzvah of *simchah* is for seven days (as it states, *ושמחתם לפני ה' אלקיכם* שבעת ימים). He says that this teaches us that Hashem loves *simchah*, and He wants His children to be happy. So we see that the mitzvah to be joyous is for more days than the *arba minim*.

People say, “I have so many troubles, how can I be happy?”

Even those blessed with a loving, healthy family, and *parnassah* and *nachas* too, are also always sad, because they are worried about the future. Happiness eludes them, and they wonder how they can keep the mitzvah of being happy on *yom tov*.

The solution is to have *emunah* and *bitachon*. To have *emunah* that we have

a Father in heaven Who cares for all our needs. As the Or HaChaim (*Shemos* 22:6) writes, “There isn’t a single moment when Hakadosh Baruch Hu isn’t working for each individual.” And to have *bitachon* that Hashem will continue holding our hand, to take care of us in the future.

We don’t always understand how everything is for the good, but we believe that it is so.<sup>2</sup> With these thoughts in mind, we can be happy on *yom tov*.<sup>3</sup>

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2. We make the *brachah* on the *esrog* מיטן פֿיטום אראפ, with the *pitom* facing down. The words מיטן פֿיטום אראפ is also an expression which refers to when everything is spiraling downwards; nothing is working out. When everything looks down, we thank Hashem because we believe that although we don’t understand, everything is good.

The Alter of Slobadka *zt'l* said: When the Rambam leaves out a halachah from his *sefer*, scholars remain up all night, trying to understand why the Rambam left it out. They are certain there is logic and reason. It wasn’t an oversight... So when something is missing in your life — be it *parnassah*, or any other matter — why don’t you also understand that it wasn’t an oversight?

A Holocaust survivor complained against Hashem before the Chazon Ish. The survivor couldn’t make peace with the tragedies he witnessed. The Chazon Ish showed him a Tosfes and asked him to explain it. The man tried but failed to understand the Tosfes.

The Chazon Ish told him, “If you don’t understand a few line of Tosfos, how do you expect to understand the ways of Hashem, which is concealed from all mankind.

We say in *Tehillim*, מה גדלו מעשיך ה' כולם בחכמה עשית.. איש בער לא ידע וכסיל לא יבין את זאת, “How great are your ways, Hashem.. A fool doesn’t understand them...”

Why does the *pasuk* single out that a fool doesn’t understand Hashem’s ways? Also the wise can’t grasp the depth and breadth of Hashem’s ways! The answer is, the wise know they can’t understand. When something happens to them that doesn’t make sense, they aren’t surprised, because they know it is impossible to grasp Hashem’s ways. The fools think everything should make sense to them. And when it doesn’t, they have questions on Hashem, *chalilah*.

3. Sometimes people say they trust in Hashem, but they are all worried and uptight. That’s a sign they don’t truly trust in Hashem. We can explain (*Yiirmiyahu* 17:7), ברוך הגבר אשר, ויהיה ה' מבטחו, who is the blessed person who trusts in Hashem? יבטח בה, the sign is happiness. ויהיה means happiness. If he is a happy person, this proves he has *bitachon*.

It says about Yisro, וישמח יתרו זהו פשוט, ומדרש אגדה (*Shemos* 18:19). *Rashi* writes: נעשה בשרו חדודין חדודין.

Another approach to be happy in *yom tov* is to be happy that we have the opportunities to perform these precious mitzvos.

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

*Shulchan Aruch* (529:3) states, "One eats and drinks and is happy on the holiday. But he shouldn't be involved just in the meat, wine, laughter, and lightheadedness, because laughter and lightheadedness aren't joy. That's levity and foolishness. We aren't obligated with levity and foolishness, only with *simchah* that is for Hashem's service..."<sup>4</sup>

The Tzemech Tzedek (Lubavitz) *zt'l* advises us to pray for *simchah*. As Dovid HaMelech prayed, שמה נפש עבדך "Make your servant's heart joyous" (*Tehillim* 86:4).

Additionally, we must realize that any degree of *simchah* is an accomplishment. 50% happy, and even just 10% happy, is better than being 100% sad.

The Bnei Yisaschar said that this is implied by the words, והיית אך שמח. The word אך, Chazal tell us, indicates מיעוט, a small amount. Even if one only acquires a small degree of joy, it is worth pursuing, because Hashem doesn't request from a person more than he can do.<sup>5</sup>

For our purposes, we give the following translation: זוהו פשוטו, when one has *emunah peshutah*, וישמח, he is happy. ומדרש אגדה, but when one doesn't have simple *emunah*, rather he tries to rationalize, and to understand everything, נעשה בשרו חדודין חדודין, he is always worried and he feels like his flesh is being pierced all over, because of his distress.

In *Selichos* we say, השתדלו והרבו תחינה ובקשה. This hints that the primary *hishtadlus* should be תחינה ובקשה, prayers to Hashem. Because when one has *emunah peshutah*, he realizes that everything comes from Hashem, and we should turn our hearts to Him.

4. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* teaches that we read *Koheles* on Succos to remind us that joy isn't the product of the *hevel havalim*, the frivalties of this world. True *simchah* is attained when one is connected to Hashem via Torah and mitzvos.

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

The Ritv"a (*Bava Basra* 121.) explains that the average person wasn't permitted to perform stunts and dance, so the joy should remain holy and it shouldn't turn into הוללות, levity.

Similarly, the Sfas Emes explains that והיית אך שמח, the Gemara says, implies a מיעוט, and it is excluding הוללות, levity.

5. We can also translate והיית אך שמח, one should be happy even when he is going through

### The Joy Lasts the Entire Year

The joy of Succos lasts for the entire year. The Trisker Magid *zt'l* repeats from his holy father, Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl *zy'a*, that Succos is called זמן שמחתנו, and זמן can be translated as preparation. Thus, זמן שמחתנו means we are preparing joy for the entire year, during these days of succos.

The Abarbanel teaches this lesson from the words, ושמחת בחגך... והיית אך שמח. He explains if you will be happy in your holiday, you will always be happy. He writes, "The *pasuk* is giving us a guarantee: If you will be happy Succos, you will be joyful the entire year."<sup>6</sup>

The Pele Yoetz writes, "We are commanded to be happy, שמחה של מצוה, and this is a good omen (סימן) 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 he will have a good year, and he will be happy throughout the year."

### Reasons for the Mitzvah of *Simchah* on Succos

Yom Kippur has just passed, and all Yidden are clean from sins. But we are worried and concerned: how will we maintain our purity throughout the year? The counsel is *simchah*. Happiness steers us clear from sins.

Hashem tells us to be happy for seven days on Succos, so we can remain pure the entire year.

Many wonder why there is a mitzvah to bring joy to a *chasan* and *kallah*, who are already happy.

The Chozeh of Lublin *zy'a* explained:

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hardships. Chazal say אך means a מיעוט, limitation. Even then, והיית אך שמח, be happy on *yom tov*.

In the middle of the *tochachah* it states, תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לב, "because you didn't serve Hashem your G-d with joy and with a good heart" (*Devarim* 28). Why is this *pasuk* stated in the middle of the *tochachah*?

It teaches us that even when one is experiencing curses and hardships, he should seek to be happy.

The Torah lists ninety-eight *tochachos* and Chazal tell us that these curses are rectified by the ninety-eight sacrifices that are brought on Succos. (14 sheep x 7 days = 98.) On the holiday of Succos we are liberated from all curses of the *tochachah*.

The Avnei Nezer explains:

The *tochachah* comes from lack of *simchah*. As it states, תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לב, "Because you didn't serve Hashem your G-d with joy and with a good heart" (*Devarim* 28). On Succos we serve Hashem with happiness, and therefore Succos atones and saves us from the ninety-eight curses of the *tochachah*.

6. See also the Ibn Ezra on the *pasuk* ושמחת בחגך (*Devarim* 16: 14-16). He explains that the joy of the holidays extends to the future, enabling him to be happy throughout the entire year.

The *aveiros* of the *chasan* and *kallah* are forgiven on the day of their *chasunah*. They become like Adam and Chava before their sin. But they are worried about maintaining their clean state throughout their lifetimes. That is why we gladden them at their wedding. It tells them that if they want to remain clean from sins, they should always be happy.<sup>7</sup>

We too, have just become purified from all sins on Yom Kippur. Therefore, the Torah tells us we should be happy for seven days. This joy will enable us to maintain our purity throughout the year.

The Alshich Hakadosh explains that Hashem created the world because Hashem desires to dwell in this world (דירה בתחתונים). That happens every year after Yom Kippur, when the Jewish nation is purified from all sins. He writes, “Hashem wasn’t happy with His

creation until that time... and in every generation, there is no happier time for Hashem than Succos, as then the Jewish nation is cleansed from their sins, due to Yom Kippur. And since Hashem is happy with our purity it is proper that we too should be happy at this time.”

#### Between Yom Kippur and Succos

The Shlah Hakadosh (Succah, Torah Or, 2) teaches that just as Hashem compassionately gave us Yom Kippur to atone for all our sins, similarly Hashem gave us the four days following Yom Kippur. These days are subdivisions of Yom Kippur, which grant us atonement. The Shlah explains, “During these four days the Jewish nation serve Hashem—they build the *succah*, buy the four *minim*, and they prepare for Yom Tov עם התעוררות הלב, with an inspired soul,” and this brings our atonement.<sup>8</sup>

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7. After Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge he was cursed, בעצבון תאכלנה (*Bereishis* 3:17), his *parnassah* will be earned with difficulty. Similarly, Chavah was cursed, בעצב ויתאבלו, “they mourned” (*Shemos* 33:4). These sources show us that the product of sins is sadness. Happiness pulls away from the influence of sin.

8. It is known among chassidim that the preparation for a mitzvah is greater than the mitzvah itself. Rebbe Dovid of Tolna *zt'l* said that this concept is learned from the four days that are between Yom Kippur and Succos, when people are buying the *arba minim*, preparing the *succah*, etc. and they have atonement, but during Succos, when they perform these mitzvos, they don’t have atonement. This shows that the preparation for a mitzvah, is greater than the mitzvos themselves.

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* proved this concept from the *simchas beis hashoeivah* in the Beis HaMikdash, when we celebrated the mitzvah ניסוך המים, to pour water on the *mizbeiach* before Hashem. Chazal say that through this celebration they drew (שואבה) *ruach hakodesh*. Notice, the Gemara doesn’t say they had *ruach hakodesh* by the performance of the mitzvah itself. This proves to us that the preparation of a mitzvah is greater than the mitzvah itself. Some buy an *esrog pushka*, a silver *esrog* box, for a *chasan*. The *hidur mitzvah* implied in this gift is different than most *hidur mitzvah*. For example, a silver Chanukah menorah

This is the reason Chazal (*Vayikra Rabba* 30:7) call the first day of Succos, ראשון לחשבון עוונות, “the first day for reckoning sins.” It is the first day, because until now, all our sins are forgiven.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 20.) says, השטן is *gematriya* 364. (A lunar year has 365 days.) This is because the Satan can speak against the Jewish nation 364 days a year, but on Yom Kippur the Satan remains silent.

The Yaaras Dvash (2:10) points out that although השטן is *gematriya* 364, שטן (without the prefix ה') is *gematriya* 359. This is because there is another five days during the year that are similar to Yom Kippur, when the Satan can't incriminate us. They are the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, and the first day of Succos.

*Shulchan Aruch* (624:5) teaches, "One doesn't say *tachanun*... from Yom Kippur until Succos..." The Magan Avraham adds that one shouldn't fast during these days. He explains, "They are joyous days because the *chanukas*

*hamizbeiach* in the era of Shlomo was in these days."

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* teaches: It states in *Tehillim* (60:8), אלקים דיבר בקדשו אעלוה אחלקה שכם ועמק סוכות אמרד. This can be translated as follows: אעלוה - ה', Hashem said, I rejoice with the five days of atonement- Yom Kippur plus the following four days.

אחלקה-ה' I divide these five days, שכם, *gematriya* 360, from the other 360 days of the year. Because the Satan can speak against the Jewish nation 360 days a year, but not on these five special days that Hashem has prepared them to atone for Bnei Yisrael.

Rebbe Yissachar Dov continued: The Gemara tells that a *succah* may be up to twenty *amos* high. Taking into account that there were 3 walls, and each *amah* is six *tefachim*, the calculation becomes  $20 \times 3 \times 6 = 360$ . The dimensions of the *succah* imply that this mitzvah brings sanctity to the other 360 days of the year. These five days of the year are holy days

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becomes part of the mitzvah. A silver *becher* for Kiddush and *havdalah* becomes part of the mitzvah. But the silver *esrog* box is used before and after the mitzvah, not during the mitzvah. This is because the *esrog* represents the heart, and the heart of a mitzvah is expressed primarily in the preparation before, and by the joy that follows the mitzvah. a silver box shows that we are happy with this mitzvah and we cherish this mitzvah.

Chazal say (*Yoma* 29), הרהורי עבירה שין מעבירה, thinking about an *aveirah* is worse than doing the *aveirah*. The Sfas Emes (בחוקתי תרמ"ד) writes that similarly, thinking about the mitzvos is greater than the mitzvah itself. "Because the correction of the soul comes from thinking a lot and desiring to serve Hashem."

It states (*Hosheia* 14:10), צדיקים ילכו בם ופושעים יכשלו בם. The *pasuk* is hinting that tzaddikim prepare for the mitzvos, but the *resha'im*, יכשלו בם, just fall into the mitzvah, without any prior preparation



of atonement, when Hashem forgives Bnei Yisrael. The rest of the year receives its holiness from the succah, whose dimensions represents the 360 days of the year.

This is the explanation of the *pasuk* (stated above): ועמק סוכות אמרד, the measurements of the *succah* projects holiness to the rest of the year, so the entire year should be holy.

Rebbe Yissacher Dov's son, Rebbe Ahron of Belz *zt'l* added that this is the intention of the *pasuk*, הנה מפחות נתתה ימי (Tehillim 39:6), that the days of the year receive their spirituality from מפחות, the 360 *tefachim* of the *succah*.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 119) says, "The world exists in the merit of the Torah study of children. Rav Pappa asked Abaya, 'and what about my Torah, and what about your Torah?'"

"Abaya replied, 'We cannot compare the voice [of a child] who never tasted sin, to the voice of someone who has tasted sin.'" Children never sinned, and therefore their Torah is so precious and it sustains the world.

The Kozeglover Rav *zt'l* in his *sefer Eretz Zvi* writes that on the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, adults are also clean from sins. Therefore during these days their Torah study sustains the world. Furthermore, an adult is מצווה ועושה, obligated to study Torah

(while a child isn't) and the value of an obligatory mitzvah is greater. Therefore, during these days, the value of Torah study is exponentially greater.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* was so happy and excited during the four days after Yom Kippur, because of the atonement, he wasn't able to focus on Torah. Instead, he composed songs and poems, to express his yearning and gratitude to Hashem (collected in *Sefer Shiras Moshe*).

The lesson for regular people like us, is to focus on Torah, and to make as much out of these days as possible, because these days are especially exalted above the rest of the year.

It is written דרשו ה' בהמצאו, "Search for Hashem when He is near" (*Yeshayah* 55). When is Hashem near? The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 18) teaches אלו עשרה ימים שבין ראש השנה ליום הכיפורים, "These are the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur."

The Shlah HaKadosh (*Succah, Torah Or* 70) asks, there are seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Why does the Gemara say there are ten days?

The Shlah answers that the Gemara is hinting to the ten days between *Yom Kippur* and *Hoshanah Rabba*. Because Yom Kippur is called Rosh Hashanah<sup>9</sup> and Hoshanah Rabba is called Yom Kippur.<sup>10</sup> In between, there are ten

9. As it states, בראש השנה בעשר לחודש (*Yechezkel* 40).

10. This is because similar to Yom Kippur, on Hoshanah Rabba we receive the חתימה טובה a good seal for the new year.

days. About these days it states, דרשו ה' בהמצאו, search Hashem when He is near. They are days similar to the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. They are also days of repentance and forgiveness, and we can remain clean from sins throughout these days.

### *G-t's Numen*

The day after Yom Kippur is called *G-t's numen*, "Hashem's name" (ג-ט'ס). Why?

The Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* said that on this day we begin saying ה-א-ל הקודש once again. That's why this day is called *G-t's numen*, "Hashem's name."

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* gave another reason why this day is called *G-t's numen*. On Yom Kippur, the nation heard the *cohen gadol* say the *shem hameforash* (Hashem's name הוי"ה, as it is written) and they fell on their faces and said, ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד. The *Yerushalmi* (*Yoma* 3:7) teaches that immediately after Yom Kippur, everyone forgot how to pronounce the name, since the correct pronunciation of Hashem's name must remain a secret, known only to a few selected people (see *Kiddushin* 71.). On the morning after Yom Kippur, everyone was asking each other, "Do you remember how the *cohen gadol* pronounced Hashem's name?" (but no one remembered). And since everyone was talking and asking about *G-t's numen*, the day after Yom Kippur is called *G-t's numen*.

My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe

Mordechai Lelover *zt'l*, gave a third explanation why this day is called *G-t's numen*, based on a story that happened to his grandfather, Rebbe Dovid of Lelov:

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zy'a* once listened in to *melamed* teaching a young child. The *melamed* said, "Hashem's name is very holy. Therefore, the *Chumash* doesn't always write out Hashem's name, in case it somehow becomes *chalilah* desecrated, ripped, and the like. Instead, the *Chumash* writes two *yuds*. These two *yuds* should be read as Hashem's name."

When the *melamed* reached the end of the *pasuk*, the *melamed* didn't say Hashem's name. The student asked, "There are two *yuds* here (the two dots at the end of the *pasuk*). Why don't you read it as Hashem's name?"

The *melamed* replied, "When two *yuds* are next to each other, it's Hashem's name. But when one *yud* is higher than the other, it's a *pasuk*, a separator between one *pasuk* and the next one."

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov said he learned from this: When two *Yidden* (two *yuds*) feel equal, no one feels greater than the other one, Hashem's name is there. But when one *Yid* feels higher than the other, it's a separator, and Hashem's name doesn't reside there.

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai repeated this story and said: After Yom Kippur, everyone is cleansed from sins, and all *Yidden* are on the same level. That's two *yuds* side by side, and Hashem's name is there. This is the reason the day after Yom Kippur is called *G-t's numen*.

The first day of Succos is called יום ראשון עונה, להשבין עונות, the first day of counting the sins, because the purity of sin of Yom Kippur extends until the first day of Succos. On this day we take an אחרונה, which tzaddikim said is *roshei teivos* for אלה תביאני רגל גאווה, "don't bring me to arrogance." By taking the *esrog*, we are hinting a prayer that we should remain equal with all Yidden, we should always be pure from sins. It should never be that one feels higher than another, and then Hashem's name will always be with us.

#### *Erev Succos*

The Shaarei Teshuvah (625) writes: "It is proper to give a lot of charity on *erev Succos*. Reb Chaim Vital would distribute the *tzedakah pushke* to the poor on this day."

Rebbe Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* (who was extremely generous to the poor every day of the year) increased his *tzedakah* on *erev Succos*, distributing large amounts of money to the poor. He said that there isn't a nicer *noy succah* [*succah*

decoration] than the *tzedakah* one gives on *erev Succos*.

#### *Ushpizen*

The Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah writes: "*Erev Succos* is the time to distribute charity. It is also the day to gather proper guests, *b'nei Torah*, for the *yom tov*."

The *Zohar* teaches that on Succos the seven *ushpizen*: Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Ahron, Yosef, and Dovid come to our *succos* to celebrate with us. When they come, they look to see if there are guests present. If there are guests, they remain in the *succah* and bless all the participants. But if there aren't any guests, they leave. Therefore, it is important to have guests (or at least, to support the poor) for Succos.<sup>11</sup>

Rebbe Eliezer of Dzikiv *zt'l* was extra cautious to have a guest for the first day of Succos, because the first day of Succos is the *ushpizen* of Avraham Avinu who is renowned for his *hachnassas orchim*.

11. The Gemara (*Avodah Zorah* 3) tells us that in the future, Hakadosh Baruch Hu will give the nations one more chance to keep the Torah. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will say to them, "I have a simple mitzvah; it is called *succah*. Keep this mitzvah [and you will be rewarded together with the Jewish nation'."

The Gemara relates, "Immediately, everyone will go and build a *succah* on his rooftop. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will have the sun shine brightly, and it will become extremely hot. They will all kick their *succos* and leave."

The Gemara explains that a Yid may also leave the *succah* if it is very hot, but a Jew would never kick the *succah* when he leaves. The nations of the world kick the *succah* in disdain, and will thereby forfeit their reward.

*B'derech tzachus* we can say, why will the nations of the world build their *succos* specifically on their rooftops? It is because they desire to avoid the poor guests. They don't want people knocking at their door requesting to join them. On the contrary, the Jewish nation seeks to have guests on Succos.

One year, the Dzikiver Rebbe didn't have a guest for the first day, so he asked his son (the Imrei Noam *zt'l*) to go outside, and see if he could find someone who needs a meal. The son walked around the streets until he found a homeless drunk. He realized that this man certainly didn't have a place to eat. "Come with me," he said to the pauper. "My father invites you to come for the *seudah*."

The Dzikiver Rebbe rejoiced with his guest and served him fish, meat and other delicacies. The Rebbe said: "Avraham Avinu didn't have better guests. Avraham cared so much about people that he was eager to bring home anyone who desired a meal. At least, on this day, we should emulate Avraham Avinu's ways..."

#### Head, Body, and Soul

The Gemara (*Succah* 3) teaches that it isn't sufficient to stick one's head into the *succah*, leaving the rest of his body outside the *succah*, and eat in such a manner. Most of his body must be inside the *succah*. The Gemara calls this: ראשו ורובו ושולחנו בתוך הסוכה, his head, most of his body, and his table must be inside the *succah*.

The minimum a *succah* can be is seven *tefachim*, because that has enough room for ראשו רובו ושולחנו.

The Sfas Emes explains that these laws and dimensions hint that one's entire being – heart and soul – should be in the *succah*. He shouldn't be in *succah*, and his heart is with other matters. He should

be totally attentive on the mitzvah he is performing.

The table represents his wife and children. He must bring them into the *succah* too. This means the head of the family must bring them into the ambience of Succos.

If someone sat in the *succah* without joy, he technically kept the mitzvah. But one shouldn't be satisfied with this level of performance. As the Sfas Emes taught, ראשו ורובו ושולחנו, his entire essence should be in the *succah*, and he should influence his family to experience this joy and spirituality together with him.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (625:1) states: "When one sits in the *succah* he should have in mind that Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded us to sit in *succos* to remember *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and to remember the ענני כבוד, clouds of glory, which Hashem wrapped around us, to protect us from the cold and heat (שרב והשמש, when we were in the desert). One should think these thoughts, and in this manner he will be keeping the mitzvah properly (בתיקונה). However, *bide'aved*, one has accomplished the mitzvah even if he merely had in mind to do the mitzvah."

This quote from the *Mishnah Berurah* teaches us that thinking about the reasons for *succah* (a remembrance of *yetzias Mitzrayim* and the ענני כבוד) is part of the mitzvah. Generally, the reasons for the mitzvos are not part of the mitzvah. For example, one doesn't need to know why Hashem commanded us to

take the four *minim* or why Hashem commanded us to hear the shofar. We are obligated to take the *lulav*, to listen to the shofar — but we are not obligated to know the reason why we do so. But on Succos, an integral part of the mitzvah is to think about and know the reason why we have this mitzvah. As the Torah says, במסכת תשבו שבעת ימים...למען ידעו דרותיכם כבסוכות הישבתי את בני" בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים, "Sit in *succos* for seven days...

so all generations shall know that I sat the Jewish nation inside *succos* (ענני כבוד) when I took them out of Egypt..."

This is because one should keep the mitzvah of *succah* with his whole being. He should be thinking about what he is doing, and be connected with the mitzvos. As the Sfas Emes taught, ראשו רובו ושולחנו inside the *succah*.<sup>12</sup>

12. Every mitzvah has endless reasons (some of them are revealed in the holy *sefarim*).

When one performs the mitzvos with these intentions in mind, it raises the value of the mitzvos performed.

It states, עת לעשות לה' הפרו תורתך. עבדך אני הבינני (Tehillim 119). The Meiri explains: עת לעשות, when one keeps the mitzvos solely because the time (עת) arrived for the mitzvah, then לדי, it is as though he is transgressing the Torah *chalilah*. This isn't what Hashem wants. הפרו תורתך, עבדך אני הבנני, "I am Your servant, therefore teach me the reasons behind the mitzvos, so I can perform them properly."

The Meiri explains, "If a person eats matzah on Pesach and sits in a *succah* [of Succos], he is like a donkey that carries wheat during the harvest season and grapes during the grape picking season...." Time shouldn't be the only factor and reason we keep the mitzvos. We should study what the holy *sefarim* teach us about the mitzvos, and we should perform the mitzvos with those lofty reasons in mind.

The Meiri concludes, "This also applies to the simple folk who don't know the reasons for the mitzvos... [nevertheless], with their limited understanding, they should keep the mitzvos with inspiration. They should think about how they are doing Hashem's will Who commanded them, and they are bringing Him honor..." Having that simple thought in mind raises the deed from being mediocre to being a special mitzvah before Hashem.

Reb Eliyahu Lopian *zt'l* told a story, which happened in his hometown. A gentile child was murdered. False witnesses were hired to testify in court that a Yid killed the child, to use the blood for 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 them, they never contradicted one another. The Yiddens' lives were in danger.

One wise Yid said to the judge, "there is another method to determine who is guilty. Today, courts use trained bloodhounds. The dog smells the blood, and is able to determine who the murderer was."

The judge agreed to put it to test. He decreed that on the next day, all the townspeople must gather in the town square. (The Yidden spent the time saying *Tehillim* and praying for a *yeshuah*.) The blood-stained clothing of the murdered child was brought to the dog. The

The Yesod v'Shoresh HaAvodah writes, "When a person learns about the greatness of this mitzvah and its large reward, and about the seven exalted *Ushpezin*, he will yearn intensely for this mitzvah... כי מאד גדלה מעלת מצות סוכה, because the mitzvah of *succah* is very great..."

#### The Holiness of the *Succah*

It states (*Shir HaShirim* 1: 4), הביאני המלך, הדריו נגילה ונשמחה בך, "the king brought me into his inner chambers. We will rejoice and be happy with you." The *Shem MiShmuel* (5679) explains that when one comes to the *succah*, he has entered Hashem's innermost chamber. Sitting in the *succah* is happiness, because עון וחרוה במקומו, "in Hashem's place, there is strength and happiness."

The Gemara (*Chagigah* 5:) writes that there seems to be a contradiction: One *pasuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 13:17) states, במסתרים תבכה נפשי, "[Hashem's says] I cry in concealment." Another *pasuk* (*I Divrei HaYamim* 16:27) states, עון וחרוה במקומו, that in Hashem's place there is strength and happiness.

The Gemara answers, "The difference is whether we are discussing Hashem's innermost chambers or whether we are discussing Hashem's outer chambers."

Rabbeinu Chananel explains that Hashem cries in his outer chambers, and He is happy in His innermost chamber.

Accordingly, we can explain that Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur, we are judged in Hashem's outer chambers, and this explains the crying and the awesomeness of those days. Succos, Hashem brings us into His inner chambers, and that's the reason for our joy.

The Yesod Yosef (77) teaches, "Someone who sits in the *succah* and learns and davens there, is literally living in the upper worlds. Each world is called יום, as this is known... Therefore it states (*Vayikra* 23:42), בסוכות תשבו שבועת ימים, because by living in *succos* we dwell in the seven upper worlds."

The Eliyahu Rabba and the Bikurei Yaakov teach that סוכה is *gematriya* 91, the same as the two holy names "אדני"

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dog sniffed it and went directly to the true murderer. No one was surprised who the murderer was, because he was renowned for his cruelty and dishonesty. Alas, the Yidden of the town were saved from the blood libel.

Reb Eliyah Lopian said, "Did the dog know what he was doing? Did it realize that it was saving Yidden from a pogrom? The dog didn't know anything. It only knew to smell the blood, and to go to the person with the same scent. When we keep the mitzvos," Reb Elyah Lopian explained, "it shouldn't be done without some level of awareness. When we take the *lulav* and *esrog*, and when we sit in a *succah*, we should know what we're doing. We shouldn't do the mitzvos without intentions, just because we have an obligation."

We should strive to know the reasons behind the mitzvos. And even when one doesn't know the reasons, he should rejoice that he has the privilege to do Hashem's will and to bring Him honor, for that is the main intention for all mitzvos.

הוי"ה. Therefore, they teach, we must treat the *succah* with immense holiness.<sup>13</sup>

The shade of the *succah* is called צל, shadow. The *Zohar* (vol.3 103:) calls *s'chach* צל, דמיהמונתא, "the shade of *emunah*." Similarly, the Gemara (*Succah* 2.) states a person must sit סוכה בצל, in the *succah's* shade.

צל means shade or shadow. A shadow mimics what a person does. If a person moves his hand, the shadow moves together with him. The Baal Shem Tov *zt'l* explained that this is the meaning of the *pasuk*, ה' צלך, "Hashem is your shadow" (*Tehillim* 131), because as a person acts (with *chesed*, *rachmanus*, etc.) Hashem mimics his behavior, and acts with him and with klal Yisrael in that mode.

The Ropshiter Rav *zt'l* (*Zera Kodesh*, first night of Succos) explains that *succah* is called צל, because as one sits in a *succah* made from wood and branches, Hashem mimics him, and has him sit in the shade of the divine *succah* (בצל סוכה עליונה).

When one sits in a *succah*, he is being hugged *keviyachol* by Hakadosh Baruch Hu. As it states in *Shir HaShirim* (2:6)

שמאלו תחת לראשי וימינו תחבקני, "His left arm is under my head, and He hugs me with his right arm." The Midrash says, "שמאלי is the *succah*..."

The Arizal taught that the dimensions of the *succah* signify a hug. An arm has two long parts, and a small hand. These correspond to the *succah*, which has two walls, and a third wall which according to halachah can be as small as a *tefach*. This means sitting in the *succah* is like being hugged by Hashem.

The Yaaras Dvash (vol.1 *drush* 6) teaches that when one sits in *succah*, the ענני כבוד are spread above of him. "Although the cloud isn't seen, nevertheless it is certain and true that it is there. When one sits in *succah* and studies Torah and is happy with the *yom tov* and with the mitvzos, then Hashem's cloud is upon him from above. Fortunate is the eye who sees it."

The Gemara (*Succah* 4) also teaches that a *succah* must be at least ten *tefachim* high, "because the *Shechinah* never went down [to earth] lower than ten *tefachim*." The Chesed Le'Avraham and the Sfas Emes *zt'l* point out how this implies that when one sits in the *succah*, Hashem

13. One of the tzaddikim of Tzfas saw a chassid who was afraid to walk into the *succah*. He said, "The *succah* is filled with Hashem's names. How can I walk on it?"

The tzaddik replied, "A Yid is also comprised of Hashem's names. *Sheimos* may go on top of *sheimos*."

Rebbe Yechiel of Alaxender *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*."

Tzaddikim were extremely careful that a gentile shouldn't enter the *succah*, because of the great sanctity that is there.

hovers over him. As it states in *Zohar* (vol.3 103), "When a person sits in the *succah*... the wings of the *Shechinah* spread over him..."

The Mishnah Berurah (439:2) writes: "Since the *succah* is extremely holy, it is proper that one should minimize speaking *divrei chol* (mundane talk) there and instead speak Torah and holy words. One should unquestionably be careful not to speak *lashon hara*, *rechilus*, and other forms of forbidden speech in the *succah*."

The Shlah warns us that one shouldn't become angry in the *succah*.

#### Similar to the Beis HaMikdash

The Gemara (*Succah* 9) states, "Just as Hashem's name is on a *korban*...so is Hashem's name on the *succah*."

It states, חג הסוכות שבעת ימים לה', "The holiday Succos, seven days for Hashem..." The Toras Cohanim (*Emor* 12, following the Raavad's interpretation) asks, since the Torah says the *succah* should be לה', for Hashem, and the Torah compares the *succah* to a *korban* (as it states חג לה', and חג hints to the *korban chagigah*) perhaps we should build the *succah* on Har HaBayis, and to sanctify it like a *korban*?

The Toras Cohanim replied that since it also states, חג הסוכות תעשה לך, "You shall make for yourselves the holiday Succos" we understand that it is for each individual's usage. Thus, it isn't built on Har HaBayis.

Although the Toras Cohanim disproved his initial theory, the fact that it was suggested that the *succah* be built on Har HaBayis and sanctified like a *korban* helps us recognize just how holy the *succah* is.

The Pri Megadim states: One mustn't use a *succah* as a shortcut. Definitely one may not spit there, because the *succah* is holy, and has laws similar to the laws practiced in the Beis HaMikdash.

The Arizal teaches that the table one eats on in the *succah* should have four legs, similar to the *shulchan* of the Beis HaMikdash. Once again, we see the correlation and comparison between the Beis HaMikdash and the *succah*.<sup>14</sup>

#### Gan Eden

The Keren l'Dovid writes, "When one sits in the *succah l'shem shamayim*, he feels the holiness, with *hislahavus* (ferver). He experiences the light of the mitzvah, and he knows that it is true that we were surrounded by the ענני כבוד. This

14. The Magen Avraham (262) writes that the Arizal was careful to eat on a four-legged table every Shabbos of the year. *Mekubalim* write that even for those who don't do so every Shabbos, it is worthwhile for them to do so in the *succah*.

We are not necessarily recommending everyone to use solely a table made from four legs, because there are many suggestions of the Arizal that are only practiced by kabalists, and not by the average person. Nevertheless, we repeated the Arizal's lesson so we can appreciate some more the holiness of the *succah*, how it is comparable, in several ways, to the holiness of the Beis HaMikdash.



is something that cannot be explained. But someone who experienced it knows that it's true."

The Sfas Emes (5643) also writes, "[The *succah*] is like Gan Eden. Man was created to live there, in Gan Eden, the place of true joy, as we say, בשמחה יצירך. בגן עדן. Adam was banished from Gan Eden, nevertheless, there are times when a spark of Gan Eden shines... This is the reason people are happy when they are in *succah*..."

This level of happiness people experience in the *succah* differs among people. Some people are very happy in the *succah*, and they feel the holiness. Others are less attached to the mitzvah.

The Shem MiShmuel (5673) said that this is because the *succah* is similar to *teivas Noach* (Noach's ark). Rashi writes that the animals came on their own to Noach's *teivah*, but only the animals that didn't sin were able to enter the *teivah*. Those who sinned were banished from the *teivah*.

Similarly, everyone sits in the *succah*, but only those who are worthy can experience its great joy and holiness.

The Shem MiShmuel writes, "If the *succah* accepted him he will experience

a very good feeling being in the *succah*. But, *chas veshalom*, if the *succah* doesn't accept him, he will not be happy being there... If one enjoys the *succah* immensely, this proves that the *succah* accepted him immensely. This is something that cannot be seen. It is in the feelings of the heart, and only revealed to Hashem."<sup>15</sup>

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

#### Shame and Courage

The Torah says (*Vayikra* 23:42), בסוכות תשבּו, "Dwell in succos..." The word תשבּו has the same letters as בושת, shame. The Yeivev Lev (*Yeitav Panim Succos* 10) explains that one should feel embarrassed to enter the holy *succah*. How does he have the courage to enter this holy abode? The answer is with thoughts of *teshuvah*. As the *pasuk* continues, כל האורה. The translation of האורה, "I will shine." Although right now I am not worthy to enter the *succah*, in the merit that I will improve my ways, I am able to come into the *succah*. As Chazal (*Kiddushin* 40.) say, "When one has a good thought, Hashem considers it as though he did it already."

15. 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 mitzvos [and that they sit in a *succah*, etc.]" The Shem MiShmuel asks, why does Hashem need to testify this? Isn't it something that everyone can see?

The Shem MiShmuel answers that it is visible that we keep the external aspect of the mitzvos. Hashem testifies that we keep the inner spirit as well. Not only did we sit there, but we experienced the joy and holiness of the *succah* too.

The *pasuk* concludes, **כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים**, "Because I placed them in *succos* when I took them out of Mitzrayim." When they left Mitzrayim, they weren't worthy, but in the merit that they will receive the Torah in the future, they could sit in the *succah*. Similarly, since I will improve my ways, I have the right to enter the *succah*.

#### Speech in the *Succah*

Now that we've learned a drop about the holiness of the *succah*, we understand that we should dwell in there for seven days with holiness.

The Reishis Chachmah teaches, "The Remak was careful to only speak holy words in the *succah*, because of the holiness of the *succah*..."

The Gemara says that if it rains (**גשמים**) on *succos*, it's a bad omen. The Rebbe of Kotz *zt'l* explained, if one is thinking about **גשמים**, material matters, while sitting in the *succah*, it's a bad omen. Ideally, when sitting in the *succah*, one's mind should be on loving Hashem and cleaving to Him. Right now he is in the most holy place, why should he be thinking about mundane matters?

Chazal say, **מצמער פטור מן הסוכה**, if someone has distress in the *succah* (for example, it's raining) he's exempt from the mitzvah. Allegorically, we can explain

this Chazal that if someone is capable of thinking distressful thoughts while sitting in the *succah*, he is **פטור**, exempt from this mitzvah, because he is so distant from the attitude this mitzvah is seeking to place us in.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Emunah*

The Chidushei HaRim taught that when one sits in the *succah* he can merit attaining clear *emunah*. Because it states, **בסוכות תשבו שבעת ימים... למען ידעו**, "Live in succos for seven days... so you will know..."

The Chidushei HaRim explains that Succos follows Yom Kippur, because one needs to be cleansed from sins to be able to truly grasp *emunah*. It is written, **עונותיכם מברילים ביניכם לבין אלקיכם**, "Your sins separate you from Hashem" (*Yeshayah* 59:2). Our *emunah* in Hashem can be perfected when we are cleansed from sins.

Therefore, when we sit in the *succah*, it's an ideal time **לדעת**, to think about *emunah*, and to strengthen our awareness of Hashem.

The Yerushalmi (*Succah* 2:3) teaches that *lechatchilah*, one should be able to see the stars through the *s'chach*. Perhaps this is so he can look up to heaven and train himself to trust in Hashem.<sup>17</sup>

16. Someone once said that he didn't sleep in the *succah* because it was too cold. Rebbe Yitzchak of Skvere *zt'l* replied, "I never saw anything colder than your *Shemone Esrei*, and I see that you can sleep well in it."

17. Before the Satmar Rebbe's *zt'l chasunah*, his father told him, "Why is the chuppah customarily under the sky? To remind the *chassan* and *kallah* to turn to Heaven for all

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 3) tells that in the future, the nations of the world will beg Hashem to give them another chance to keep the mitzvos, so they can earn Olam HaBa. Hashem will tell them to sit in *succos*.

The Gemara tells us that they will fail the test. Hashem will put out a very hot sun. They will all kick their *succos* and leave, and thereby lose their right to Olam HaBa.

We can explain it as follows:

The hot sun hints to very hard times. A Yid believes in Hashem through good times and through hard times. But when hard times befall the nations of the world, they fail the test. They were prepared to sit in a *succah*, which signifies believing in Hashem, as long as everything is good and comfortable for them. But they don't believe in Hashem when times are rough.

### *Bitachon*

The *Sfas Emes* (5645) writes, "The mitzvah of *succah* is the mitzvah of *bitachon*. As Chazal say, צא מדירת קבע, 'Go out of your permanent house...' and stop trusting in your assets and begin trusting in Hashem alone... Succos is זמן שמחתנו, 'the time of our happiness,' because no one is happier than the one who trusts in Hashem<sup>18</sup>..."

It is written, הבוטח בה' חסד יסובבנו, 'Hashem's kindness envelops [and hovers over] the one who trusts in Hashem.' Hashem hovers over us with the *s'chach* on this holiday [on this holiday we demonstrate our trust in Hashem]... The holiday is called חג האסיף, 'the holiday of gathering,' because in this season, people harvest the crops [for the entire year]. Similarly, Hashem's blessings are given at this time for the entire year, to those who trust in Hashem..."

The Aruch Lener (end of *masechta Succah*) writes, "The *s'chach* represents

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their needs. This is the same reason a *succah* is outdoors. Seeing the sky helps us remember Hashem."

18. It says, והיה ה' מבטחו. *Chazal* say that והיה is an expression of joy. והיה ה' מבטחו can mean, when someone is happy, it's an indication he has *bitachon*.

The Chovas Halevavos writes: "Someone who has *bitachon* will attain his *parnassah*, and it will free him from financial worries."

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner *zt'l* taught that Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l* said that a person can earn immense wealth from any kind of *parnassah*, even from selling splinters of wood. The only condition is that the *parnassah* shouldn't be disgusting to him.

The Rebbe of Kozmir *zt'l* taught that *simchah* is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. He derived this from (*Devarim* 33:13), שמח זבולון בצאתך, Rashi translates it, הצלח בצאתך לסחורה, "He will have success when he goes out to business." We see the two words שמח-צלח are synonymous, because when one is happy, he will have success.

Similarly, Targum Yonoson on שמח ויהי צלח בהצלחותא ברם חדוון בהצלחותא, "joyous with their success," because when one is happy, he will have success.

Hashem's salvations as it states, ה' צלך, 'Hashem is your shade.' The walls represent matters of this world... A *succah* higher than twenty *amos* is *pasul* because he is sitting in the shade of the walls, and not in the shade of the *s'chach* (see *Succah* 2.). That would signify that he is placing his trust in matters of this world, and not on Hashem."

The Ohev Yisrael *zt'l* (*Likutim Succos*) says that a chicken first calls her children and then feeds them. After they finish eating, she shelters them under her wings. This is what happens during the High Holidays. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Hashem writes down and determines how much money to give us for this year. After setting the income and amount of food, the *Shechinah* takes us under her wings in the *succah*.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* taught that Hashem treats us during these days in the same manner a mother cares for her children. On Rosh Hashanah, בלאזט מען אונז, Hashem blows on us, and blows away the bad. On Yom Kippur, וואשט מען אונז אפ, Hashem washes us, as it says, וזרקתי עליכם, מים טהורים, "I will throw onto you purifying waters" (*Yechezkel* 36). And on Succos, דעקט מען אונז צו, Hashem covers us and swaddles us.

#### Luxuries

We are commanded to leave our comfortable homes and to spend a week in the *succah*. One purpose for this mitzvah is to remind us that luxuries

shouldn't be our goal in life. We can live with less, just fine.

On the *pasuk*, וה' ברך את אברהם בכל, "Hashem blessed Avraham with everything." The Midrash states that בכל, "everything" is the mitzvah *succah*.

What is the Midrash teaching us? Why is *succah* considered having everything?

The Chozeh of Lublin (*Avnei Zikoron* 662) *zt'l* explains, *Succah* is our reminder that luxuries aren't as important as people make it out to be. A person who lives with this belief has הכל, everything, because no matter how much he has, he is never lacking.

It states (*Bereishis* 25:8), ויגוע וימת אברהם, בשיבה טובה זקן ושבע, "Avraham died at a ripe old age; old and satisfied..."

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains:

"This *pasuk* is teaching us Avraham's good *middos*. He left this world feeling totally fulfilled. He didn't need more. As it is also stated about Dovid HaMelech (*Tehillim* 21:3), האות לבו נתתה לו. Dovid received all his desires, and he didn't want more. This is unlike most people, about whom it's written (*Koheles* 5:9), אוהב כסף לא ישבע כסף, 'one who desires money will never have enough money.' And Chazal (*Koheles Rabba* 1:32) say, 'A person doesn't leave the world with half of his yearnings fulfilled. If he has a hundred, he wants two hundred. If he has two hundred, he wants four hundred.'"<sup>19</sup> But Avraham was זקן ושבע

19. This Midrash is difficult to understand, because it states that a person doesn't even

ימים; he wasn't lacking anything. He was satisfied and happy with what he had. Because Hashem blessed Avraham בבל, to know that whatever he has, it is always enough. It may be less than what others have, but he doesn't need more.

This is the lesson of *succah*.

Rebbe Yonoson Eibshitz (6:1) writes, "The one who fears Hashem won't only have *succos* during the holiday of Succos. Throughout the entire year he will remember that life is temporary and he's living here as a guest. One should sleep in the shade of the *succah* and leave his permanent home... He should look up at the stars and place his trust in Hashem. He shouldn't build expensive houses, decorated with gems and diamonds, just for pleasure. This will lead him to desire more money and other sins, even to steal so he can fill his fortress and be proud, and he will forget Hashem who created him. Remember

Yundav ben Rechev's precious, ethical ill (*Yirmiyahu* 35:6), for he told his children that they shouldn't live in houses. They should only live in tents, which are temporary dwelling place, one day living here, and another day living somewhere else. This is what our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov did, for they dwelt in tents. This gave them long life, because they weren't afraid a fire might burn their castle down, and they weren't afraid of enemies, hunger, or plague, since they could quickly undo the strings of their tents and travel to a different country. <sup>20</sup>

"When Bilaam saw the Jewish nation dwelling in tents he said, מזה טובו אהלך יעקב, 'How good are your tents...' He was referring to their tents, specifically, because we are people who dwell in tents... and then it will be good for us in this world and in the next world. But when we build houses made from lime

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get half his desires, and then it states that if he has a hundred, he desires two hundred. So it seems he did get half of his desires.

We can answer that when someone has a hundred, he thinks: "I'm not happy with my lot, but if I will have two hundred, then I will be satisfied." He wants two things. He wants another hundred and he wants happiness. This means he desires more than double the amount that he has now.

20. The Yaaras Dvash teaches that avoiding luxuries and living with the minimum is *mesugal* for *arichus yammim*, long life. He proves this from the forefathers who lived in tents, and therefore they lived long, too.

The Yaaras Dvash also proves this from the Mishkan, which was made from יריעות, skins and woven cloth, and the Mishkan lasted for 480 years (counting the years the Mishkan stood in the desert and later in Eretz Yisrael, until its last location in Nov and Givon). Whereas the Beis HaMikdash that Shlomo HaMelech built from stone and gold only stood 410 years. The second Beis HaMikdash also only stood for 420 years, and during those 420 years, there was the Greek conquest, and the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed several times. So we see that where there are fewer luxuries, things last longer.

and stone, the stones will shout out all the sins: theft, pride, temptation, desires... This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (בסוכות תשבו שבעת ימים, *Vayikra* 23:42).” Dwell in *succos*, and learn the message *succos* teaches us.

The Kli Yakar (*Vayikra* 23:42) writes, "After people harvest the crops, they want to go home and live in a permanent dwelling. The Torah feared this may lead to arrogance... Therefore the Torah says *כל האזרה*, whoever has plans to live in this world as a permanent resident, *ישבו בסוכות*, he must leave his permanent home and dwell in a temporary *succah*, so he will not forget his humility. He mustn't forget that he is like a stranger in this world; he isn't a permanent resident here. And then, he won't trust in the walls of his home; he will only trust on Hashem..."

On the *pasuk*, *בסוכות כי בסוכות הושבתו את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים* (*Vayikra* 23:43), the Rashbam writes, "According to the *pasuk's* simple translation, "*succos*" stated in this *pasuk* means literal huts. This is the reason for this mitzvah:

“[The Torah obligates us] to make *succos* at a time when you harvest your crops... so you shall remember that for forty years the Jewish nation lived in huts in the desert. Think about this, so you will thank Hashem for giving you property and houses filled with goodness. Don't say you got all of this by your own might... This is the reason Hakadosh Baruch Hu established the holiday of Succos at a time when the crops and the vineyard are being

harvested, so you shouldn't become proud with all the goodness you have, and you shouldn't think that you earned all of that on your own."

#### Retaining Succos after Succos

There's a phrase that people say on Shmini Atzeres (it's written in the *piyut* of פונים מסוכה לביתם לישב צקון, (מערבית לשמ"ע), לחשם הקשב, "Listen to the prayers of those who leave the *succah* to sit in their homes." The Shiniver Rav *zt'l* asks: Wouldn't it make more sense if it would say, "Listen to the *tefillos* of those who sit in *succah*"? Why do we pray that Hashem should listen to the *tefillos* of those who *leave* the *succah*?

The Shiniver Rav *zt'l* answered that Succos should remain with us the entire year. One should bring the *עול מלכות שמים* he absorbed in the *succah* into his home. Therefore, we pray that Hashem should answer the prayers in the merit of those who leave the *succah* and bring the atmosphere of Succos into their daily lives.

It is written, *ויעקב נסע סוכתה ויבן לו בית* (*Bereishis* 33:17). The Satmar Rebbe (*Divrei Yoel*) *zt'l* explained, *bederech remez*, when Yaakov came to the holiday Succos, he turned it into a house, into something permanent, so it would remain with him throughout the year.

It is also written, *בסוכות תשבו*, "In *succos* you shall dwell..." The Gemara derives from this *pasuk* that one should live in the *succah* the same way one lives at home. The Satmar Rebbe taught that we should also derive from this *pasuk* the

opposite, that one should live in his home in the same manner he lives in the *succah* (based on the Talmudic principle, אין היקש למהצה). He should bring the atmosphere that he experienced in the *succah* to his daily life.

The Gemara (*Avodah Zorah* 3) calls *succah*, מצוה קלה, a light and easy mitzvah. The expression קלה is also stated in (*Gittin* 56), בריה קלה (in reference to the small creature that entered Titus HaRasha's head, and afflicted him, until he died). The Gemara explains that the insect is called קלה, because this insect only eats, and doesn't defecate.

We derive from this that קלה means to take in, and not to give out. Reb Avraham Yehoshua Friend of Nasod zy'a hy'd explained that *succah* is called מצוה קלה because one should only take in the light and the holiness of the *succah*, and it should never depart from him.

In the Yom Tov *tefillah* we say, והנחילנו ה' ואלקינו...מועדי קדשך, "Hashem gave us as a legacy... the holy *yom yovim*..." A legacy, the Sfas Emes said, is something that remains forever. It isn't something that leaves after a few days pass. So too, the holidays should always remain with us, even after the holiday is over.

A chassid of the Beis Aharon of Karlin returned home after spending a *yom tov* together with his Rebbe. People asked him, ווי אזוי איז אריבער די יום טוב, "How did the *yom tov* pass?"

The chassid replied, די יום טוב איז נישט אריבער, די יום טוב איז אריין, "The *yom tov* didn't pass

by. It came in." The *yom tov* became part of him.

After *yom tov*, Rebbe Dovid of Tolne zy'a asked one of his chassidim how he was getting back home. The chassid replied, "The same wagon driver that brought me here will bring me back."

The Rebbe said, "You're going back with the same goy?" In other words, we shouldn't go back after *yom tov* with the same goy in us, as before.

The Dubno Magid related the following *mashal*, to explain why people cry by *Neilah*:

A king had an only daughter who he loved dearly. When it was time to marry her off, a matchmaker told the king about a certain wealthy prince who lives in a distant land. "He lives distant from here, but he is the son of a great king, has a lot of money, and has all good qualities..."

The king agreed to the match, and his daughter was married. Shortly after the royal wedding, the groom told his wife that he wants to live in his home-country. She didn't want to go there; so distant from her father. But she saw how important it was for her husband, so she agreed.

In that foreign land, she discovered the truth: Her husband wasn't the son of a king; it was all a lie. Furthermore, her husband was cruel to her. He didn't act like a royal prince, who is trained to have good *middos*. He acted like the lowest people.

She suffered immensely from him, but she was too distant from her father to complain, so she suffered silently.

One day, the king sent them a letter: "I miss you so much. Since you are not coming to visit me, I decided I will take the long trip to visit you." The king wrote them the date he expects to arrive.

The husband realized that needs to make some quick changes. He hired many workers to clean and decorate his home, so it would appear like the house of a prince. He also began behaving nicely to his wife. He didn't want the king to see there was a problem between them.

The king was with them for some time, and he was very pleased with what he saw. He believed he chose the correct partner for his daughter.

The king was about to leave, and the princess realized that this was her last opportunity to tell her father what was really happening. She called her father to a private room, and amidst tears, she told him that her husband isn't the son of a king, and that he acts cruelly to her.

The *nimshal* is ,when Rosh Chodesh Elul arrives Hashem, *keviyachol*, announces that he is going to visit us during the days of judgment. Throughout Elul, people are busy cleaning up their deeds, so the King shouldn't see that anything is amiss. The body makes peace with the *neshamah*, to conceal from the King what is happening throughout the year. But then we daven *Ne'ilah*, the King is about to leave. At this time, the Yid cries to Hashem and says, "I, the *neshamah*,

suffer immensely from the body. When you were here, the body was acting nicely to me, because it didn't want You to know what is really happening. But now that You're about to leave, I must tell You the truth. The body is cruel to me, and draws me to sin. I don't want to be with the body anymore."

This is the end of the Dubno Magid's *mashal* and *nimshal*, but some add the following:

The king thought of a solution:

"I will live here together with you. In my presence, your husband will act properly with you at all times."

The *nimshal* is, by *Ne'ilah*, when we cry that we don't want to be with the body, throughout the year, Hashem replies: "Build a *succah* and I will live together with you. And even after Yom Tov, I will remain with you. And in My presence, the body will not disturb you from serving Me."

#### Staying Focused

An expensive Mercedes came to a stop the border. The border police suspected contraband and asked the driver to open the baggage compartment. All they found were buckets of soil.

"What's this?" they asked him.

"I'm building a new home, and the earth I need for building is cheaper in the other country. So I go there and fill up buckets with sand..."

They didn't believe him. It was strange



that one would import soil, just to save a few pennies. So they sifted through the earth hoping to find diamonds but they didn't find anything, and they let him pass.

The following day, he drove his Mercedes to the border, once again. The border patrol sifted through the soil, didn't find anything and let him on his way. This happened every day for months. After a while, they stopped sifting through the earth, because they saw that there was nothing there.

One day, he came to the border and told the guards that he wouldn't be coming anymore. "I finished building my house, so there's no reason for me to bring more earth."

They asked him, "Tell us the truth: were you just bringing earth all this time? It doesn't make sense that you would go through all this effort, just because the earth is a few pennies cheaper."

He replied, "I'll tell you if you promise that you won't arrest me and that you won't report me to the government."

They promised. He said, "The soil was just a coy. I was importing Mercedes cars. Every day, I drove a new Mercedes..."

The moral of the story is that there are lots of things that can distract us from the primary focus of the *yom tov*. Let's not get side-tracked. We have a mitzvah to sit in a *succah* and to perform all the other mitzvos, and that is the real treasure we should be focusing on.

The doctor's waiting room wasn't air conditioned, neither was it furnished

nicely. It was also obvious that the worn-out tiled floor wasn't washed for quite a while. And, as usual, the doctor was behind schedule.

Most of the people waiting for their appointment accepted these discomforts in silence. It wasn't their first time here, and they were accustomed to these matters. Nevertheless, they kept coming back because the doctor was from the best in his field — though he failed in decorum and punctuality.

There was first-timer waiting for his turn with the doctor, and he was very upset with the service. Unlike the others who accepted their fate in silence, he spoke out loudly. "I never saw anything like this in my life. A doctor should care about his patients. Why isn't the air conditioner working? Why are the chairs uncomfortable? Why is this room so dingy? And why can't this doctor keep to his schedule? My appointment was supposed to be an hour ago! I used to go to Dr. Ploni. He is a specialist in the same field. Now that's a waiting room as it should be. He invests in the most modern furniture, the room temperature is always comfortable, controlled by an automatic air conditioning system, and he keeps to his schedule."

The people in the room asked him about that other doctor. "Is he a good doctor? Are his patients happy with him?"

"No, no one is really happy with him. I wasn't either, and that's why I changed doctors. He isn't the wisest guy around, if you know what I mean. I don't know

how he ever graduated college... But the waiting room is first class..."

The *nimshal* is: Succos is approaching. We will sit in the *succah*; we will take the four *minim*. The *succah* will be beautifully decorated, and the four *minim* will be the most precious set. All is good and well, but what about the performance of the mitzvos? How will they be performed? With joy and desire? With a connection to Hashem? Or with sadness and/or disinterest? We must maintain focus, and keep the mitzvos in the best way we can.

### *Segulos*

The mitzvos have many *segulos*. One earns many benefits in this world and the next world, from keeping the mitzvos.

Chazal praise some of the holy *amora'im* and *tana'im* that they didn't walk four *amos* without Torah or they didn't walk four *amos* without wearing *tefillin*.

Regarding most people of our generation it can be said, "They don't walk four *amos* without their cell phone." Who doesn't have a cell phone, and who doesn't have it on them every moment of the day?

Believe it or not, there are still some people among us who don't own a cell phone.

Reb Baruch Buxsbaum of Boro Park is such a person. He doesn't have a cell phone, for he found it greatly disturbs his Torah and *tefillah*. But, he admits, not owning a cell phone in this generation isn't a simple matter, because it is so hard to contact him.

He has a business partner, Reb Sender from Williamsburg. To get around the lack of communication, Reb Baruch calls Reb Sender every morning from his landline house phone, and they make up where and when they will meet that day, and any other business related matter.

One morning, Reb Baruch called his business partner, Reb Sender: "I will be on 42nd St. in Manhattan in an hour... Can we meet there?"

"Certainly, but tell me, did you finally buy a cell phone? I see a new number on the screen..."

Reb Baruch replied: "I didn't buy a new cell phone and, as you know, I'm not planning to. I borrowed the phone from Reb Mendel Rosenberg, the head of the Boro Park *chevrah kadishah*..."

An hour later, Reb Sender was standing on the corner of 42nd St., as they made up, but Reb Baruch wasn't there. (He couldn't call him, since Reb Baruch didn't own a phone.) Reb Sender thought that maybe he misunderstood where to meet, so he walked around the street a little bit, hoping to find him.

Suddenly, he heard someone calling, "Rabbi! Rabbi!" Reb Sender turned and saw an elderly woman rushing towards him. She told him she needs advice. "My husband is Jewish – I'm not. He's in the hospital now. The doctors don't expect him to live. Can I ask the doctors to pull the plug and let him die?"

Reb Sender told her that it was forbidden to kill even an old, dying person.

She gave him some more information about her husband: "He used to be

religious, but become irreligious and married me. He committed many white collar crimes and was in prison for several years now. In prison he began to do *teshuvah*. He had permission to go home for the holidays, but he didn't come home for Succos. He told me that in the prison there was a *succah* and the four *minim*. He wouldn't have them at home, so he preferred to remain in prison. A few weeks ago he suffered a stroke and he's been in the hospital since then. The doctors say he won't make it.

"What should I do when he dies? Can I call a priest to take care of the funeral, and bury him in a Christian cemetery?"

"Don't do that," Reb Sender told her.

"He should be buried as a Jew."

"But I don't know who to contact. I don't know how to arrange these matters."

Reb Sender remembered that he had the phone number of Reb Mendel Rosenberg, the head of the Boro Park *chevrah kadishah*, since Reb Baruch had just called him from that number. He gave her the number and told her that when her husband is near his death, she should call Rabbi Rosenberg.

She was very grateful for all the advice she received.

Soon afterwards, Reb Sender found Reb Baruch waiting at a different corner. (They had indeed misunderstood each other.)

This story shows *hashgachah pratis*. If Reb Sender hadn't been waiting for Reb Baruch, he wouldn't meet this woman,

and she wouldn't know how to deal with her dying husband. She may have even pulled the plug and killed him before his time, and then have him buried in a Christian cemetery. Also, by Hashem's providence, Reb Sender had the *chevrah kadisha's* phone number on him that day, because Reb Baruch called him from that phone. All these steps were arranged by Hashem, to help this *baal teshuvah*.

We can see from this story how precious *teshuvah* is to Hashem. Many miracles and *hashgachah pratis* happened, so this *baal teshuvah* could live out his life and then have a proper Jewish burial.

Perhaps it was also in the merit of *succah* and the four *minim* that this Yid kept, at the end of his life, with *mesirus nefesh*. He refused a furlough from prison, so he can keep the mitzvos of *succah* and the four *minim*.

There's a *tefillah* to say when going into the *succah*: זכנו לשבת ולחסות בסתר צל כנפך בעת פטירתך מן העולם, "May I merit to dwell and be protected under the shade of Your wings when the time comes for me to depart this world." Thus, the mitzvah of *succah* may have helped that Yid be buried according to halachah, so he could reside in heaven under the *Shechinah's* wings.

A *tefillah* said for the four *minim* is: מצוות ארבעה מינים אלו תאריך אפך שנוכה לשוב אליך, "In the merit of the four *minim*, hold off your anger until I merit to repent before You." This mitzvah may have helped him die at his right time, and complete his *teshuvah*. This wouldn't have

happened, if she would have allowed the doctors pull the plug.

We've seen a couple of segulos for the mitzvos of succos, and there are countless more. The mitzvos are precious treasures, to help us in this world and the next.

#### The Four *Minim* and the Four Letters of Hashem's Holy Name

The Beis Yosef (651) says: The Rikanti saw in his dream Rabbeinu Yitzchak Ashkenazi. Rabbeinu Yitzchak Ashkanazi was writing Hashem's holy name, but the final *heh* was distant from the first three letters. The Rikanti didn't know the dream's interpretation. The next day, he saw Rabbeinu Yitzchak Ashkenazi carrying the *esrog* distant from the *lulav*. Then he understood the meaning of the dream. He told Reb Yitzchak Ashkanazi that the four *minim* represent the four letters of Hashem's name...and the *esrog* represents the final *heh* of Hashem's name. One must hold them together, so the final *heh* be connected with the first three letters."

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zy'a* adds that although the letters have to be near each other, there needs to be some space between the letters. This is the reason we use *koishelach* (*lulav* holders). They serve as a separator between the four *minim*, so they can represent the four letters of Hashem's name הו"ה, being together, with the proper amount of space between the letters.

The Midrash (quoted in *Ramban Vayikra*

23:40) states: "The *esrog* is Hakadosh Baruch Hu, as it states... The *lulav* is Hakadosh Baruch Hu as it states... *Hadassim* are Hakadosh Baruch Hu... The *aravos* are Hakadosh Baruch Hu..." The Midrash brings *pesukim* to prove it. This is because the four species represent the four letters of Hashem's holy name *Havayah*.

Based on these ideas, Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zy'a* explains the *pasuk*, ה' לי לא אירא, "Hashem is with me, and I am not afraid." He teaches, ה' לי, "Since Hashem is in my hands [as I hold the four *minim*] לא אירא, I have nothing to fear." *Keveyachol* Hashem is in his hand, and he can attain all his desires. `

This idea is beyond our understanding. We only quote these holy words so we should have a small indication of the greatness of the mitzvah of the four *minim*, and the potential of our *tefillos*, as we say *Hoshanos* holding the four *minim* in our hands.

Reb Shimon Deitsh *zt'l* (*Imrei Shefer*) writes, "My teacher, the Chasam Sofer *zt'l*, would [hold the four *minim* throughout the entire *tefillah*]. He said the love of the mitzvah helps him have concentration. He had more *kavanah* on Succos while holding the four *minim*, than he had on Yom Kippur."

The Midrash teaches: The *esrog* represents the heart, the *lulav* the spine, the *hadassim* the eyes, and the *aravah* the mouth. The Chidushei HaRim taught that shaking the *lulav* and *esrog* is like trying

to wake up someone. On Shabbos we don't take the four *minim*, because Shabbos itself awakens us.<sup>21</sup>

#### Spending Money for the Mitzvos

One *erev* Succos, in one of the communities in Europe, there weren't any *esrogim* available. One merchant arrived with an *esrog*. Taking advantage of the shortage, he asked for an exorbitant price.

Everyone in the community contributed, because when it comes to mitzvos, klal Yisrael are ready to spend a lot of money. (Especially for an *esrog*.) For generations klal Yisrael paid a lot of money for an *esrog*, because of their love for the mitzvos.

But there was one wealthy miser who refused to contribute. Since he was wealthy he should have contributed the bulk of the money, but he didn't give anything. Because of him, they almost weren't able to buy the *esrog*.

In the end the *esrog* was in the *rosh hakahal's* home, because he paid most of the money. The entire community lined up at his door to shake the four *minim*. That wealthy miser also wanted to shake the four *minim*. But the *rosh hakahal* refused to give him the *esrog* since he didn't contribute anything towards its purchase.

When the *rosh hakahal* was walking to the beis medresh, proudly holding the

four *minim*, the wealthy miser shouted the *brachah al netilas lulav*, lifted up the *rosh hakahal* and shook him in all six directions.

The rav of the community witnessed this, and told the *rosh hakahal* to allow this wealthy man to hold the *esrog* and *lulav* in his hands.

When the miser man died, his deeds were weighed in heaven, and the scale tipped to the side of sin. A merciful angel asked "Did the court place the mitzvah of *lulav* that he performed onto the scale?"

"We have," the court replied "and we placed his shame on the scale as well, when the *rosh hakahal* didn't permit him to shake *lulav*, but it still isn't sufficient."

"Did the court also place the *rosh hakahal* onto the scale?"

"The *rosh hakahal*?" the court asked. "Why should we do that?"

The kind angel explained, "He so desired to do the mitzvah, he even lifted the *rosh hakahal* to do it. The *rosh hakahal's* weight should be placed on the scale, too." That tipped the scales in his favor, and he was thereby granted entry to Gan Eden.

This story, whimsical as it is, is an exception, because usually Klal Yisrael gives generously for mitzvos, and they are willing to pay a lot of money for the mitzvah of the four *minim*, when necessary.

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21. The Shever Mussar explains that *yavash* (dried out *esrog* and *lulav*) are *pasul*, because one needs to be fresh and alive when he serves Hashem, not shriveled up.

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* said that when Yidden pay a lot of money for the four *minim*, this grants them a good year. He explained this בדרך צחות as follows:

At the judgment on Yom Kippur, when all the sins are shown before the court, an advocate *malach* says, “The Yidden aren’t responsible for their sins, because the Satan tricked them.”

The court replies, “What are you saying? Do you think the Jewish people are so simpleminded that they believe anything someone tells them? The Satan tries to entice them, but they should have been wiser, and ignored him.”

The advocate *malach* says, “No, they really are very simpleminded, and it is easy to fool them. Wait a few days and you will see.”

The following days the Jewish nation pay hundreds of dollars for a fruit, whose retail value is a few cents. “You see, they are easily tricked.” And with this claim, their sins are exonerated, and they are signed for a good year.

The Bardichever Rav *zt'l* once met with the Satan, and saw that the Satan was very sad.

“What’s the matter?” the Bardichever Rav asked him.

“A ship load of *esrogim* are coming. Yidden will make *brachos* on them, and the Gemara (*Succah* 38.) says that the mitzvah of the four *minim* are like an arrow in my eyes.”

Sometime later, the Bardichever Rav found the Satan, and this time the Satan

was happy. “What happened?” the Bardichever Rav asked him. “The last time we met you were upset, because of a shipload of *esrogim* that was coming.”

The Satan replied, “I took care of that. I sank the ship, and the cargo is lost.”

Chol HaMoed Succos, the Satan was sad again. The Bardichever Rav asked him, “What’s the problem this time? I thought you sunk the ship.”

“That’s true, but somehow, Yidden managed to get a few *esrogim*, and their desire for *esrogim*, the high prices they paid, and their joy for the mitzvah was even more precious in heaven than had they all received *esrogim* from the ship I sank. Now I regret sinking the ship. I just increased their desire for the mitzvah, which made their mitzvos even more precious...”

### Unity

It is written, בל האזרח בישראל ישבו בסוכות, "All members of Yisrael should sit in the *succah*. Focusing on the word בל, “all” the Gemara (*Succah* 27) teaches, “It is fitting for all Yidden to dwell in the same *succah* (*Succah* 27).” This hints that the *succah* is, סוכת שלום, a place where we increase peace and cast away all divisions. All Yidden are united and can potentially live under the same roof.

On Yom Kippur, everyone makes up with their fellow man, and all differences are resolved. Now we can sit together in a *succah*, a place of peace with all our brothers.

Furthermore, the *Sfas Emes* (*Yom Kippur* 651) writes, “All *neshamos* are united,

but it is sins that draw people apart.” So after we are cleansed from all *aveiros*, we sit in the *succah* with unity and peace with everyone.

The four *minim* (*esrog*, *lulav*, *hadasim* and *aravos*) also represents the unity of the Jewish people. The Midrash teaches that the *esrog* (which has a good scent and a good flavor) represents Torah scholars who do good deeds. The *lulav* has a taste (it comes from a date tree) but it doesn't have a smell. This denotes the Torah scholars who lack good deeds. *Hadasim* have a smell, but no taste. They stand for the Yidden who do good deeds but don't study Torah. The *aravah* has neither a scent nor a taste, and they represent the Yidden who lack both qualities.

“Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, ‘Tie them together in one bundle so they will be forgiven for their sins together’ (VaYikra Rabba 30:12).<sup>22</sup>

Between Yom Kippur and Succos, many people would go to the Tepliker Rav (Reb Shimon Ahron Polonski *zt'l* of Yerushalayim) with their *lulavim* and *esrogim*, to ask whether they were kosher and *mehudar*. The Tepliker Rav would ask them to donate some money for the poor at this time. Most people gave generously to the cause, but one person said, “I would love to help, but I am also

very tight this year. After I buy the four *minim*, I will not have any money left.”

The Tepliker Rav disagreed “Nothing will happen if you don't buy the four *minim*. You can always borrow the four *minim* from another person. But if a family doesn't have fish and meat on Yom Tov, and due to their poverty they shed even just one tear, that tear can arouse great *kitrugim* in heaven, and then we will need immense mercy to rectify the situation...”

The Tepliker Rav once actually followed this counsel. One year, on the first day of Succos, the people in his beis medresh were astounded to hear the Tepliker Rav ask someone to lend him his *esrog*. Why didn't he have his own? They wondered.

After some investigation, the reason was revealed. On *erev* Succos, the Tepliker Rav heard cries coming from his neighbor's home. He knocked on their door, and they told him, “One of the children played with the *esrog*; it fell to the ground and the *pitum* broke off.” The father of this household was a stern step-father, and the mother and the child were afraid that he may severely punish the child, when he discovers what happened.

The Tepliker Rav said, “I will give you my *esrog*. You can simply tell the step-father that when I saw his *esrog*, I

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22. Even tzaddikim and Torah scholars have to unite with other Yidden, including the lowly ones. This is represented by the *esrog*, which isn't valid without the other three species. Similarly, the *Beer Heitev* (645:9) writes “*Esrog* is *gematriya* 610. When combined with the other 3 species, the *gematriya* is 613.”

said that it was *pasul*, and so I exchanged it with this *esrog*. You don't have to tell him that the *esrog* fell. You also shouldn't tell him that I'm giving you my own *esrog*, so he won't feel uncomfortable using it."

Chazal say "The *esrog* corresponds to the heart." A good heart, as this story portrays, is more precious to Heaven than the most expensive *esrog*.

A similar story happened with Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz. Throughout the year, Rebbe Mordechai would put aside money for the four *minim* (which was extremely expensive in that era). One year, as he was walking to the *esrog* dealer, he saw a simple Yid, crying bitterly. "What's the matter?"

"I'm a delivery man, and my horse died and I don't have money to buy another one."

"How much money do you need to buy another horse?" The man stated a price, and the Rebbe took out his money pouch, which contained the hard-saved money for the *esrog*, and gave that amount to the man. With the leftover money, Reb Mordechai bought a lower grade *esrog*.

It was not very beautiful, but kosher.

When he came home, he said to his family, "This *yom tov*, everyone is going to make a *brachah* on a beautiful *esrog*, while we will make a *brachah* on a beautiful horse..." He rejoiced with his sacrifice, because although the value of the *esrog* is priceless, he didn't lose sight of the needs of his fellow man.

Rebbe Mordechai davened in the beis medresh of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l*. Rebbe Elimelech said to him, "I smell the scent of Gan Eden emerging from your *esrog*. How did you merit this?" and Rebbe Mordechai told him what happened.

#### The Value of an *Esrog*

Tzaddikim said that if people would know the value of the *esrog*, they would spend all the money in the world to acquire it.

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." Likewise, many tzaddikim paid large amounts of money for an *esrog*.

Once, the Vilna Gaon *zt'l* gave his students a lot of money to buy an *esrog*. In their quest, the students traveled as far as Italy, but they still couldn't find an *esrog*. At last, they heard of someone who had an *esrog*. They went to him, and offered him an enormous sum but he refused to part with his *esrog*. But when he heard that they wanted the *esrog* for the Vilna Gaon, he agreed to give it away for free, on condition that the reward of the mitzvah would be his. When the Vilna Gaon heard the details of the agreement, he was extremely happy. He said that this was his first time that he can keep a mitzvah totally *leshem shamayim*, without interest in the reward.

Reb Yohonoson Eibshitz's *zt'l* student, Reb Hirsch of Hessin *zt'l*, relates that he once saw his rebbe buy a very expensive



*esrog*. Afterwards, Reb Yohonoson saw an even nicer *esrog*, and bought that one. This happened several times. His *succah* was also decorated with costly items. "All the money in his house was valueless to him when it came to loving Hashem and His mitzvos."<sup>23</sup>

### Hoshanah Rabbah

The Gemara tells us that after one's demise he will be asked, *צפית לישועה*, "Did you wait for the salvation (for Moshiach)?" The Imrei Emes of Gur *zt'l* said that the question also means, "Did you wait for *ישועה*, for Hoshanah Rabbah, the day when Hashem bestows salvations on the Jewish nation."

Rosh Hashanah passed, so did Yom Kippur, and most of Succos. At this point, many people feel that they've accomplished what they could, and they don't feel that it is important to put effort into the final days of the Yamim Noraim. Sometimes people are discouraged, because they feel that they didn't fully take advantage of the holy days, with *teshuvah*, *tefillah* and Torah, and they aren't ready to start now. Chazal say, *צפית לישועה*, look forward for Hashanah Rabbah. Don't let it pass by without sincere *tefillos*, *teshuvah* and *tzedakah*, because we can gain so much on this day.

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23. Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zt'l* was extremely poor. The only item in his home that had value was the tefillin he inherited from his father, Reb Yitzchok Derohovitz *zt'l*. His wife urged him to sell the tefillin, so they could support the family, but he didn't want to.

Once, a wealthy person came to Zlotchev, and offered a lot of money for the tefillin. Reb Michel turned him down. He didn't want to sell it.

But one year, Succos was approaching, and there were no *esrogim* available. There was only one merchant who had an *esrog* – and he was asking an enormous amount for it; fifty *reinish*.

The Rebbe took his precious tefillin and sold them for fifty *refinish*. With that money, he bought the *esrog*.

Rebbe Michel's joy was endless. He had a beautiful *esrog* for the upcoming Yom Tov.

"How did you manage to buy the *esrog*?" his wife asked him. He didn't answer. But she continued to ask, so he told her that he sold the tefillin to buy the *esrog*.

She became angry. "How could you do that? I asked you to sell the tefillin so many times; we needed the money for the most basic essentials, but you refused. And now, you simply sold it?"

She grabbed the *esrog*, bit into it and made it *pasul*.

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

That night, he saw his father in his dream. His father told him, "Your second deed was even greater than your first. Your ability to control your anger was more precious in heaven than your *mesirus nefesh* to buy an *esrog*. Because of your restraint, many *gezeiros raos* [harsh decrees] were annulled."

The Dubno Magid *zt'l* tells a *meshal*: There were two neighboring countries that were fighting over a city located on the border — each country claimed that the city was theirs. Many wars were fought over the city; sometimes one country won, other times the other country won.

After many years of fighting they decided that each country would send forth their greatest warrior. These two powerful people would wrestle each other near a pit. The one who throws his opponent into the pit wins the battle, and the city would forever belong to his country.

People of both countries came to watch the great battle. The battle started some distance from the pit. At first, it seemed that one warrior would win. His countrymen cheered him on, while the people of the other country lamented, as it seemed clear that they would lose. They watched as the warrior pulled and dragged his opponent all the way to the pit. But suddenly, the other warrior overpowered his opponent and threw him to the ground and into the pit.

At the victory celebration, the king said to the warrior, "It appeared, at first, that your opponent was stronger than you. I was certain you would lose. How did you end up winning?"

"I won, because at the beginning of the match I let him drag me. I was waiting for my opponent to become tired and weak, and then I was able to overpower him easily."

The *nimshal* is, sometimes the *yetzer*

*hara* allows us to win a battle or two, and then when an essential and important battle comes around we are already weakened and don't have the stamina to fight. We assume that since we won so many wars until now, it doesn't matter so much if we fail this round. We don't realize that everything depends on this battle, and if we lose it, we lose everything.

The lesson is related to Hoshanah Rabbah. Many people feel they fought so many wars with the *yetzer hara* already, since the new year began. Rosh Hashanah passed, and so did Yom Kippur. On those days people did whatever they could to improve their ways and to daven with *kavanah*. During Succos, they also served Hashem to the best of their ability. Now, they think that they can let Hoshanah Rabba pass by without special attention and effort. But Hoshanah Rabbah is from the climaxes of the days that we can earn the greatest salvations. We must be vigilant, and continue our battle with the *yetzer hara* on this day too.

Concerning Yom Kippur it says, אַךְ בַּעֲשׂוֹר, לַחֲדוֹשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי. The word אַךְ means 'even.' The Meshech Chochmah explains that a person may think that Yom Kippur is only a holiday for those who did *teshuvah* during Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. But if one didn't do *teshuvah* then perhaps he doesn't have to fast. Perhaps Yom Kippur isn't for him. Therefore the Torah says, אַךְ בַּעֲשׂוֹר... even if you didn't take advantage of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, celebrate Yom Kippur.

Regarding Succos it states, אך בחמישה עשר יום לחודש השביעי. The Meshech Chochmah teaches that a person may claim that the celebration of Succos is only for those who did *teshuvah* and attained atonement on Yom Kippur. If one didn't do *teshuvah* and didn't attain atonement on Yom Kippur, perhaps he has no reason to celebrate on Succos. The Torah says אך, regardless of what happened, celebrate Succos.

We add that the *pasuk* is telling us we should never think that it is too late. If we missed the days of *teshuvah*, we still have Yom Kippur. And if we missed Yom Kippur, we still have Succos and Hoshanah Rabbah. Regardless of what happened before, continue celebrating the holidays, and you will merit your salvation.<sup>24</sup>

The Divrei Yoel of Satmar *zt'l* would daven for a very long time on Hashanah Rabbah. Once, Hashanah Rabbah was on a Friday, and it was almost Shabbos when they were still in the middle of the *tefillos*. The *gaba'im* of his beis medrash

announced that the women should go home to light Shabbos candles.

At that time the Satmar Rebbe told the following *mashal*: there was once a city that sinned against the king and the court ruled they would all be killed. They sought counsel, and were told that on a certain day, the king passes through a certain garden. They can go there on that day and plead before the king and beg for his forgiveness.

The elders of the city went to that garden and waited for the moment when the king passes through, but the king wasn't coming. One hour passed, and then another and they didn't see the king. The day was almost over. One of the wise men among them said, "It is the custom of the kings of this country to pass through this garden on this day. Therefore, the king is certainly here. It must be that he is wearing regular clothes, and we don't recognize him, but he is definitely here. Let us call out to the king, and request that he save us. Even if we don't see him, he will hear us."

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24. Hoshanah Rabbah is the *yahrtzeit* of Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Tchoortkov *zt'l*. He would say that Hoshanah Rabbah is named after the '*amen yehei shmei rabbah*.' Chazal say, "Whoever answers *amen yehei shmei rabba* with all his might, his [negative] judgment is ripped up. Reb Yochanan says, "Even if one has the sin of *avodah zorah*, he is forgiven" (*Shabbos* 119). Hashanah Rabba therefore means that our salvations come because we say *amen yehei shmei rabba*.

During World War II, the Yidden of Yerushalayim made a *kabalah* to improve their *amen yehei shmei rabba*. They began saying it with all their might and with *kavanah* to mitigate the destruction. When the Nazi general, Romel *ym's*, was in Mitzrayim with the intention to come to Eretz Yisrael, Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiler *zt'l* said to his *gabai*, "I sense that the *resha'im* won't succeed to conquer Eretz Yisrael, because the Yidden improved their *amen yehei shmei rabba*."

The Satmar Rebbe said, "Soon, today will be over. We think the King isn't here, but we must know that it isn't so. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is here. Let us call out to Hashem and request that He save us. Let's shout together, הוֹשִׁיעַ נָא וְהוֹשִׁיעַ נָא אֲבֵינוּ אִתָּךְ!"

The Satmar Rebbe concluded, "Last year, there were people among us who aren't alive anymore. It's possible that if they prayed some more on Hoshanah Rabbah, they would have annulled the decree." Everyone present cried when he said these words. They prayed Hashem should inscribe them for a good year.<sup>25</sup>

### Simchas Torah

The *Zohar* states, "On Hoshanah Rabba, their judgment was completed, and now their blessings will begin. For, on the following day (*Shemini Atzeres*) the Jewish nation celebrate with the King and receive blessings for the entire year. At that celebration only the Jewish nation are present, and when one sits with the king in solitude, whatever he asks for will be given to him."

Similarly, the *Zohar* writes, "When Hakadosh Baruch Hu unites with the Jewish nation, no other nation can join them... Hakadosh Baruch Hu is with them alone."

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

The early *sefarim* don't reveal that Hoshanah Rabba is a day of judgment. For example, the Gemara calls Hoshanah Rabbah "Yom Aravah" the day when we take the *aravah*. There is no mention that it is a day of judgment. Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* explained that in the early generations, the fear of judgment was so great, if people would know that Hoshanah Rabbah is also a day of judgment, it would take away from their *simchas yom tov*. They wouldn't be able to keep the mitzvah of ושמחת בחגיו. In later generations the fear isn't as great, and therefore, the *sefarim* reveal to us that there's a judgment on Hoshanah Rabbah too, so we can daven and do *teshuvah* and give *tzedakah*, and annul all harsh decrees.

Reb Shlomo Zalman adds, however that there is one indication to the judgment of Hoshanah Rabbah in the Gemara and early *sefarim*. Because Chazal say, בחג נידונים על המים, "Succos we are judged for rain [how much it will rain this year]," and the Levush writes, "Therefore, people light more candles in the beis medresh on Hoshanah Rabbah, similar to Yom Kippur, because it is the final day for the judgment for rain." Reb Shlomo Zalman explained that in the past, rain meant life. If it didn't rain, people would die. Things have changed in our times since water can be transported, and countries have reservoirs of water. [The Chazon Ish said that we don't fast for rain anymore, because lack of rain isn't a tragedy like 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, people wouldn't be so inspired to improve their ways for rain alone. This is the reason why in later generations, more aspects of the great judgment were revealed to us.

The Yesod Yosef writes, “The custom is to take out all the *sifrei Torah* from the *aron kodesh*... Like the love a father has for his only son, he opens up for him all his treasuries, and doesn’t withhold anything. Similarly, Hashem bestows on us immense goodness...”

Reb Henoch of Alexander *zt'l* explained that we don’t say *birchas kohanim* on Simchas Torah, because on this day we read Moshe’s *brachos*, and “it would be a disgrace to Moshe’s blessings if we had to add more *brachos*.”

The Midrash says that after seven days of Succos, Hakadosh Baruch requests we wait one more day. קשה עלי פרידתכם, “because it is hard for Me when you leave.” The Imrei Emes explains that the Jewish nation should also feel that they don’t want to leave the *yomim tovim*. This is the essence of Shemini Atzeres.

Some opinions say Shemini Atzeres isn’t called חג (see *Shulchan Aruch* 668). The Rema MiPano explains that חג means a circle. All holidays are like a circle, going around a primary point. The primary point is Shemini Atzeres. Therefore, Shmini Atzeres isn’t a חג.<sup>26</sup>

The Chasam Sofer *zy’a* teaches that Shemini Atzeres is greater than Yom Kippur, because Yom Kippur is to love Hashem through affliction, and Shemini

Atzeres is to love Hashem through joy. As it states (*Shir HaShirim* 7:7) מה יפת ומה נעמם אהבה בתענוגים, “How beautiful it is when the love is with pleasure and joy.”

The Chasam Sofer notes that there is no special mitzvah on Shemini Atzeres. Rosh Hashanah there’s shofar, Yom Kippur there’s fasting, Succos there’s living in the *succah* and the mitzvah of the four *minim*, but there isn’t a specific mitzvah for Shemini Atzeres. “This is because the holiness of Shemini Atzeres comes from people’s joy. They have pleasure with Hashem...and it isn’t dependent on a specific mitzvah...”

The Chinuch (324) writes that we don’t take the four *minim* on Shemini Atzeres because, יום השמיני כולו לה’, “The eighth day is solely for Hashem.”

The Ramban (*Emor*) explains, אינו צריך כי הוא עצמו הדר, “One doesn’t have to take the four *minim* on this day, “because there’s no need, as the essence of Shemini Atzeres is הדר, gloriful.”

The Gemara (*Taanis* 7) discusses גדול יום הגשמים “How great it is, the day it rains.” The Gemara says that it is greater than *techiyas hameisim*; great like the day Hashem gave the Torah — or even greater than that; great like the day of Creation. Salvations happen on a rainy day.

26. The Sfas Emes says the *s’chach* of the *succah* resembles a wedding chuppah. After the chuppah, comes *yichud*, an even greater unity. That is Shemini Atzeres.

It states, עוז והדר לבושה ותשחק ליום אחרון. The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* explains: עוז is Rosh Hashanah, because Hashem judges us with His might. והדר is Succos, the day we take a פרי עץ הדר. And then is Shemini Atzerers, as it states ותשחק ליום אחרון. The final day is a day of happiness.

The Avodas Yisrael *zt'l* explains that the Gemara is referring to the greatness of Shemini Atzeres, the day we daven for rain (גשם).<sup>27</sup>

Reb Chaim Palagi *zt'l* teaches: “Be very, very careful with the *tefillos* of Shemini

Atzeres, to say them with immense *kavanah*, because in addition to being the day that completes the *tefillos* from Rosh Hashanah, and everything is dependent on this day, there is no better day and no greater *eis ratzon* than this day, when Hashem desires to hear our *tefillos*.”

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27. Reb Aharon Chernobler *zt'l* said that *benching* גשם on Shmini Atzeres is *mesugal* for *parnassah*.