



**“You shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d”**

## **We Are Elated On Chag HaSuccos since We Are Supervised by HKB”H rather than by the Seventy Ministering Angels**

In honor of the upcoming, auspicious Chag HaSuccos, I would like to focus on the fact that Chazal characterized this festival as **“זמן שמחתנו”**--the time of our joy. Indeed, there is a mitzvah to rejoice on all three of the festivals (“Regalim”); on Succos, however, it is a mitzvah to rejoice even more. In the words of the Rambam (Hilchos Lulav 8, 12): **Although it is a mitzvah to rejoice on all of the appointed holidays, on the festival of Succos, there was enhanced joy there in the Mikdash, as it states (Vayikra 23, 40): “And you shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d, for seven days.”** It behooves us to understand the reason for this enhanced joy on Chag HaSuccos more so than on any of the other “mo’adim.”

Additionally, it is worthwhile to examine what the Rambam writes further on concerning the “simchah” required when performing any of the mitzvos (ibid. 15): **The joy with which a person should rejoice in the fulfillment of a mitzvah and the love of G-d Who commanded them is a very important service. Whoever holds himself back from this rejoicing is worthy of retribution, as it states (Devarim 28, 47): “Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with happiness and a glad heart.”**

Why did the Rambam see fit to include the requirement to rejoice when performing all of the mitzvos specifically here in relation to the enhanced mitzvah of “simchah” on Chag HaSuccos? At first glance, the two are not necessarily related. The requirement of performing mitzvos with “simchah” is a mitzvah concerning the service of Hashem in general, as the passuk in the tochachah indicates: **“Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with happiness and a glad heart.”**

### **The Simchah on Chag HaSuccos Is Related to Our Sins Being Forgiven on Yom HaKippurim**

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by presenting an explanation from Chazal regarding the reason for the heightened simchah on Chag HaSuccos above and beyond the simchah on the other mo’adim. It is an expression of great relief and joy for having our transgressions forgiven on Yom Kippur. This is taught in the Midrash Shimoni (Emor 654):

**The notion of “simchah” is mentioned three times in association with Succos: (1) “ושמחת בחגך”—and you shall rejoice on your festival (ibid. 16, 14), (2) “והיית אך שמח”—and you will only be joyous (ibid. 15), and (3) “ושמחתם לפני ה' אלקיכם שבעת ימים”—and you shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d, for seven days (Vayikra 23, 40) ... This association is due to the fact that the people were exonerated on Yom HaKippurim . . . Additionally, the grain and fruits of the tree have been brought inside; therefore, the notion of “simchah” is mentioned three times.**

We can spice up this explanation regarding the three times “simchah” is mentioned in the Torah in association with Chag HaSuccos by suggesting that they correspond to the three types of atonement we received on Yom HaKippurim: **כפרה, מחילה, סליחה—forgiveness, pardon, and atonement**—corresponding to three categories of transgression: **חטאים, עוונות ופשעים—sins, iniquities, and willful transgressions**. These categories are specified in the “vidui” formula we recite on Yom Kippur: **יְהי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵלֵּינוּ, שְׁתַּלַּח לָנוּ עַל כָּל חַטֹּאתֵינוּ, וְתַמְחַל לָנוּ מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, וְתִכַּפֵּר לָנוּ עַל כָּל עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ, וְתִכַּפֵּר לָנוּ עַל כָּל פְּשָׁעֵינוּ**—and so, may it be Your

**will, Hashem, our G-d and G-d of our ancestors, that You forgive us all our sins, pardon all our iniquities, and grant us atonement for all our willful transgressions.**

I would now like to present a novel idea concerning the three times “simchah” is mentioned in relation to Chag HaSuccos. We can suggest that they correspond to the three unique mitzvos HKB”H gave us to perform on this festival: (1) dwelling in the succah seven days, (2) the mitzvah of the four species, and (3) the water libation—“nisuch hamayim”—on the mizbeiach. Accordingly, I will explain the fascinating relationship between these three mitzvos and Chag HaSuccos and how these three mitzvos account for the enhanced simchah on the festival.

First, however, it is necessary to address an intriguing aspect of Chag HaSuccos. Seventy bulls were sacrificed on this festival corresponding to the seventy nations of the world. Let us refer to Rashi’s comment on the passuk in parshas Pinchas (Bamidbar 29, 18): **The bulls of the festival are seventy, corresponding to the seventy nations, and they progressively decrease in number** (fewer bulls were sacrificed on each successive day). **It is a sign of their annihilation. But in the times of the Beis HaMikdash, they (the bulls) would protect them (the nations) from punishments.** The source for this notion is found in the Gemara (Succah 55b): **אמר רבי יוחנן אי להם לעובדי כוכבים שאבדו ואין יודעין מה שאבדו, בזמן שבית המקדש קיים מזבח מכפר עליהן, ועכשיו מי מכפר עליהן.** Rabbi Yochanan said: **Woe to the idolaters who have lost (something precious) and are not aware of what they have lost! When the Beis HaMikdash stood, the mizbeiach atoned for them; but now who atones for them?** Rashi explains that it would atone for them, so that rain would fall throughout the world, since we are judged during the festival with respect to rainfall. We will endeavor to explain why seventy bulls were sacrificed specifically on Chag HaSuccos to atone for the seventy nations of the world.

**During the Generation of the Dispersion the World Was Divided Up into Seventy Nations whereas the Future People of Yisrael Were Designated to Be Hashem’s People**

To explain all this, I had a wonderful idea! We will begin by looking back at the history of the world and when the

concept of seventy nations under the supervision of seventy ministering angels came about. The text in parshas Ha’azinu sheds some light on the subject (Devarim 32, 6):

“הלה’ תגמלו זאת עם נבל ולא חכם הלא הוא אביך קנך הוא עשך ויכוננך, זכור ימות עולם בינו שנות דור ודור, שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך, בהנחל עליון גוים בהפרידו בני אדם, יצב גבולות עמים למספר בני ישראל, כי חלק ה’ עמו יעקב חבל נחלתו.”

**Is this how you repay Hashem, you worthless, unwise people?! Is He not your Father, the One Who acquired you? He has made you and established you. Remember the days of old; reflect upon the years of generation after generation. Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will inform you. When the Most High gave nations their lot, when He separated the children of man, He set up the boundaries of peoples according to the number of Bnei Israel. Because Hashem’s portion is His people—Yaakov, the portion of His possession.**

Rashi comments: “When He separated the children of man” alludes to when He dispersed the Generation of the Dispersion. He had the power to remove them from the world, but He did not do so. Instead, “He set the boundaries of peoples.” He preserved them and did not destroy them. “According to the number of Bnei Yisrael”—because of the number of Bnei Yisrael who were destined to come forth from the children of Shem, and to the number of the seventy souls of Bnei Yisrael who went down to Mitzrayim, He set the “boundaries of peoples”—seventy nations distinguished by seventy languages.

The Midrash Tanchuma (Ha’azinu 6) elaborates on this further. It cites the Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer (Chapter 24): **When HKB”H came to mix up the Generation of the Dispersion, He said to the malachim, the ministers of all the nations, “Come and we will choose lots, to determine to whom the nations will be assigned”—one nation for each of you, and which will be your lot. So, they drew lots, and Yisrael fell to the portion of HKB”H. As it is written, “When the Most High gave nations their lot.” Similarly, it says, “For Hashem’s portion is His people; Yaakov, the portion of His possession” . . . This is the implication of “Is He not your Father, the One Who acquired you?”**

## The Generation of the Dispersion Rebelled because They Did Not Want to Be Ruled by HKB”H

To understand why HKB”H punished the Generation of the Dispersion by placing them under the supervision of the seventy ministering angels, it is necessary to understand the nature of their sin. What was their bone of contention with the Sovereignty of Heaven? Here is the pertinent text (Bereishis 11, 1): **וַיְהִי כָל הָאָרֶץ שְׂפָה אֶחָת וּדְבָרִים אֶחָדִים, וַיְהִי בְנִסְעָם: מִקְדָּם וַיִּמְצְאוּ בְקֶעָה בְּאֶרֶץ שְׁנֵעַר וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם, וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ... הֲבֵנָה לָנוּ עִיר וּמִגְדָּל וּרְאִשׁוֹ בַּשָּׁמַיִם וְנַעֲשֶׂה לָנוּ שֵׁם כִּן נִפְּוֹץ עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ.** **The whole earth had one language with conforming words. And it came to pass, when they migrated from the east, they found a valley in the land of Shinar, and they settled there. They said to one another . . . “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed across the face of the earth.”**

According to the Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer (ibid.), they despised Eretz Yisrael; this motivated them to move eastward to the land of Shinar—Bavel. This was part of the reason for the rebellion of the Generation of the Dispersion against HKB”H. But why didn’t they want to remain in Eretz Yisrael?

This can be answered based on the commentary of the Ramban (Vayikra 18, 25). He explains that all of the countries outside of Eretz Yisrael are controlled by the constellations and heavenly, ministering angels. Eretz Yisrael, on the other hand, is exclusively under the supervision and control of the Almighty, blessed is His name, without any intermediary.

**The Glorious Name created everything and He placed the power of the lower creatures in the higher beings, giving over each and every nation “in their lands, after their nations” some known star or constellation, as is known by means of astrological speculation. It is with reference to this that it is said (Devarim 4, 19): “Which Hashem, your G-d, has allotted unto all the people,” for He allotted to all nations constellations in the heavens, and higher above them are the angels of the Supreme One whom He placed as ministers over them . . . Now the Glorious Name is G-d of gods, and Master of masters over the whole world. But Eretz Yisrael, which is in the middle of the inhabited earth, is the inheritance of**

**Hashem designated to His Name. He has placed none of the angels as chief, enforcer, or ruler over it, since He gave it as a heritage to His people who declare the Unity of His Name, the seed of His beloved ones (the Avos). It is with reference to this that He said (Shemos 19, 5): “And ye shall be Mine own treasure from among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine,” and it is also written (Yirmiyah 11, 4): “So shall ye be My people, and I will be your G-d,” and you will not be subject to other powers at all.**

Understood in this light, it appears that the sin of the Generation of the Dispersion was that they refused to live under the sovereignty and rule of HKB”H in Eretz Yisrael. Instead, they preferred to be under the rule and control of the heavenly, ministering angels. After all, they witnessed the severe punishment meted out to the Generation of the Mabul; they were completely wiped out for having sinned against Hashem. Hence, they did not want to be ruled by HKB”H and be subjected to His vengeance and retribution. They felt it would be preferable to be under the control of the stars, constellations, heavenly angels, who are not so strict and intolerant. Then, they would be free to do as they please.

The fact that they feared the punishment of the mabul is substantiated by the Midrash cited by Rashi (Bereishis 11, 1): **“וּדְבָרִים אֶחָדִים” means they said, “Once in 1,656 years, the firmament collapses, as it did in the times of the mabul; come and let us make supports for it.”** In other words, they lived in imminent fear that HKB”H would also punish them with a flood from the heavens. Therefore, they schemed to build supports for the firmament, so that it would not collapse on them with a flood.

This clarifies the assertion of the Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer very nicely. That generation despised Eretz Yisrael and migrated to Bavel with the misguided, evil intent of abandoning the rule of HKB”H in exchange for the rule of the heavenly, ministering angels. Therefore, they fled from Eretz Yisrael, which is the exclusive domain of Hashem and went to the land of Shinar, which is the domain of the ministering angels.

We can now appreciate how their punishment was “midah k’neged midah.” In a sense, they got what they asked for. HKB”H transferred their supervision to the seventy ministering angels. Consequently, He would punish them



through the ministering angels. This is explained in the Midrash Tanchuma (Bo 4). When HKB”H decides to punish a people down on earth, He punishes its ministering angel above first. As it is written (Yeshayah 24, 21): **”יפקוד ה' על צבא—Hashem will issue a command to the high army on high**, i.e., the ministering angels. Only after that divine command has been carried out, then (ibid.): **”And to the kings of the earth on the earth.”**

### **During the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah We Coronate HKB”H King of the World Anew**

Following this illuminating path, we will now address the heightened simchah associated with Chag HaSuccos. Every Rosh HaShanah commemorates the creation of man and the universe. As such, we coronate and acknowledge the kingship of HKB”H over the entire universe. We express this fact in our tefilos on Rosh HaShanah: **”מלך על כל העולם כולו בכבודך... ויאמר כל אשר נשמה באפו ה' אלקי ישראל מלך ומלכותו בכל משלה—reign over the entire world with Your glory . . . And all that have breath in their mouths will declare: Hashem, the G-d of Yisrael, is King, and His kingship has dominion over all.** In his commentary, Rabbi Bachayei (Bereishis 38, 30) explains the rationale for establishing the kingship of HKB”H anew annually on Rosh HaShanah: **We say on Rosh HaShanah, the day on which the world was created, “hamelech hakadosh” and “hamelech hamishpat,” since that day represents the beginning of his actions. For, there cannot be a king without a people.**

Now, the wisest of all men said (Koheles 7, 20): **”כי אדם—for there is no man so wholly righteous on earth that he always does good and never sins.** Sinning, unfortunately, is a form of rebellion against the authority and sovereignty of Heaven. For this reason, we perform teshuvah on Rosh HaShanah and acknowledge the kingship of HKB”H over the entire world during the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah by reciting the phrases **”hamelech hakadosh” and “hamelech hamishpat”** in all of our tefilos. Because of this, we merit having HKB”H forgive and pardon all of Yisrael’s transgressions. As it is written (Vayikra 16, 30): **”כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר אתכם מכל—חטאתיכם לפני ה' תטהרו—for on this day, He shall provide atonement for you to purify you; from all of your sins before Hashem shall you be purified.**

From this perspective, the egregious error of the Generation of the Dispersion becomes ever so apparent on Yom HaKippurim. They cast off the yoke of the sovereignty of Heaven, because they viewed HKB”H as a strict, cruel king who oppresses His subjects, chas v’shalom. Yet, annually, on Yom HaKippurim, the opposite reality is revealed. The extent of His mercy and compassion are revealed when HKB”H pardons and forgives all of Yisrael’s iniquities.

This explains magnificently the time-honored Jewish tradition brought down in the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 623, 6) by the michaber and the Rama. At the conclusion of Yom HaKippurim, at the conclusion of the Ne’ilah service, the entire congregation cries out passionately together the following three pesukim: (1) **”שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד”** once, (2) **”ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד”** three times, and (3) **”ה' הוא האלקים”** seven times. Thus, we express our fervent desire to accept the supervision of HKB”H and the honor of His sovereignty gladly and happily.

### **We Rejoice on Succos for Being under the Sovereignty of HKB”H Himself**

With immense joy and enlightenment, we can now appreciate the enhanced simchah associated with the festival of Succos. After being absolved of our sins by HKB”H, we express our joy at having accepted upon ourselves His kingship, blessed is His name. We did not repeat the mistake of the Generation of Dispersion, who fled from Eretz Yisrael to Bavel seeking to free themselves of the burden of His kingship. HKB”H rewards us by giving us three mitzvos to perform on Chag HaSuccos, which all demonstrate that HKB”H reigns over us by Himself without any of the heavenly ministering angels.

The first mitzvah is to dwell in the succah for seven days—a temporary dwelling in the shadow and protection of HKB”H. It commemorates the clouds of glory that accompanied Yisrael throughout their forty-year sojourn in the midbar. Dwelling in the succah expresses our emunah that all of Olam HaZeh is nothing more than a temporary dwelling and that we are happy to be under the glorious supervision of HKB”H Himself and not under the supervision of the seventy ministering angels.

The second mitzvah is the taking of the four species. As it is written (ibid. 23, 40): **וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בְּיוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הַדֶּר כַּפּוֹת תְּמָרִים וְעֵנָף עֵץ עַבּוֹת וְעֵרְבֵי נָחַל וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים—and you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a tree of splendor, fronds of date palms, and branches of a cordlike tree, and brook willows; and you shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d, for a seven-day period.** The Bnei Yissaschar (Tishrei 10, 24) explains the underlying significance of this mitzvah based on a teaching in the Midrash (B.R. 10, 6): **There is not a single blade of grass that does not have a constellation in the heavens that strikes it and instructs it to grow.**

Furthermore, the early sages assert that the four species are distinct from all other trees, plants, and vegetation in that they are not controlled by any heavenly angel or constellation. Their growth is supervised exclusively by the Almighty Himself. By taking these four species, we demonstrate with great pageantry that like them, we, Yisrael, are not controlled by the ministering angels or heavenly constellations. The source for this notion is found in Seder HaYom (Seder Chag HaSuccos). He concludes that even Samael has no power to harm them, since they bear the emblem of the King.

The Bnei Yissaschar writes that these two mitzvos serve as reliable, kosher witnesses attesting to the fact that HKB”H Himself, in His glory, supervises over Yisrael. The mitzvah of succah is reminiscent of the clouds of glory commemorating the fact that HKB”H Himself watched over Yisrael and guided them through the midbar day and night. Similarly, the mitzvah of the four species is unique to Yisrael. It demonstrates that just as the growth of these species is supervised by HKB”H and not by any other heavenly force, so, too, He supervises the lives and existence of Yisrael by Himself, in His glory.

We can suggest that this implied in the passuk related to the mitzvah of succah (ibid. 42): **בְּסוּכוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כל האזרח בישראל ישבו בסוכות, למען ידעו דורותיכם כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים אני ה' אלקיכם.** **You shall dwell in Succos for a seven-day period; every native in Israel shall dwell in Succos. So that your generations will know that I caused the Bnei Yisrael to dwell in Succos when I took them from the land of Egypt; I am Hashem,**

**your G-d.** It is vital that we believe wholeheartedly that not only did HKB”H escort Yisrael and guide them through the midbar, but he continues to do so at all times, in every generation, and during every galus. This divine supervision is unique to Yisrael, His children!

We can imply this from the passuk as follows: **“So that your generations will know that I caused the Bnei Yisrael to dwell in Succos when I took them from the land of Egypt”**—just as HKB”H placed Yisrael under the protection of the clouds of glory to show them the way; so, too, **“I am Hashem, your G-d”**—always; and even though you cannot actually see the clouds of glory, you should know full well that He is always watching over us.

### Explaining the Joy of the Simchas Beis HaShoeivah

Now, regarding the third unique mitzvah, “nisuch hamayim.” A water libation was poured on the mizbeiach in the times of the Beis HaMikdash. Throughout the rest of the year, a wine libation was poured on the mizbeiach when a korban olah or shelamim was brought. During the seven days of Chag HaSuccos, however, a water libation was poured on the mizbeiach in conjunction with the morning tamid offering in addition to the wine libation. Apropos this mitzvah, we are taught in the Mishnah (Succah 51a): **“מי שלא ראה שמחת בית השואבה לא ראה שמחה מימיו”**—**whoever did not witness the Simchas Beis HaShoeivah never saw rejoicing in his life.**

Our blessed sages teach us that the “nisuch hamayim” was aimed at appeasing the lower waters. At the time of creation, they were separated from the upper waters, as it is written (Bereishis 1, 6): **וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי רָקִיעַ בֵּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וְיִהְיֶה מַבְדִּיל בֵּין מַיִם לַמַּיִם, וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָרָקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לַרָקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לַרָקִיעַ וְיִהְיֶה כֵן.** **G-d said, “Let there be a firmament between the waters, and let it separate between water and water.” G-d made the firmament, and He separated between the waters which were beneath the firmament and the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so.**

This separation saddened them, since it meant they would be located farther away from Hashem; so, they began

to cry. We learn that the lower waters were consoled from the following passuk (Vayikra 2, 13): **וְכָל קָרְבַּן מִנְחָתְךָ בְּמֶלַח תִּמְלַח וְלֹא תִשְׁבֶּית מֶלַח בְּרִית אֱלֹקֶיךָ מֵעַל מִנְחָתְךָ, עַל כָּל קָרְבַּנְךָ תִּקְרִיב מֶלַח—every korban minchah of yours shall be salted with salt; you may not discontinue the salt of your G-d's covenant from upon your minchah offering—on all of your korbanos shall you offer salt.** Rashi comments: **For a covenant has been made with salt since the six days of creation; for the lower waters were promised to be offered on the mizbeiach in the form of salt and during the water libations on the festival (Succos).** Rashi's source is the Midrash presented by Rabeinu Bachayei in parshas Vayikra (ibid.). After citing Rashi, he writes:

**And this is what they said in the Midrash: The lower waters are referred to as “weeping waters.” Why are they called “weeping waters”? Because when HKB”H divided the waters, He placed these above and these below. The lower waters began to weep . . . They lamented the fact that they did not merit to remain above in close proximity to their Creator. In an attempt to appease them, HKB”H said to them, “Since you acted out of respect for Me, the upper waters are not permitted to utter their song until they first obtain permission from you . . . and furthermore you (the lower waters) are destined to be offered on the mizbeiach with salt and water libations—affording you distinction and honor.”**

Now, this complements the mitzvah of succah and the taking of the four species magnificently—whose purpose, as explained, is to demonstrate our desire and joy at being

under the sovereignty and supervision of HKB”H. Therefore, we are elated at the Simchas Beis HaShoeivah, because we share the joy of the lower waters. They cried, because they also wanted to be exclusively under the sovereignty of HKB”H. Thus, we see that all three of these mitzvos—succah, the four species, and the water libation—go hand in hand and are intertwined like a **three-ply cord**.

We can now explain the Midrash above brilliantly. “Simchah” is mentioned three times in the narrative in association with Chag HaSuccos, because our transgressions were atoned for on Yom HaKippurim. Based on what we have discussed, we can propose that they correspond to the three mitzvos we perform on Succos to demonstrate our simchah for being under the sovereignty of HKB”H—Who magnanimously forgives and pardons all of Yisrael's sins and iniquities.

At this point, we have achieved a wonderful understanding regarding the rationale for offering seventy bulls on Chag HaSuccos corresponding to the seventy nations. This demonstrated dramatically the foolishness of the Generation of the Dispersion. They wished to unburden themselves of the kingship of Heaven and were relegated to the control of the seventy heavenly ministering angels. After all, those heavenly forces are totally dependent on the will and influence of HKB”H. In fact, when HKB”H chooses to take down a nation below on earth, He starts by taking down its heavenly representative. In other words, their existence and sustenance comes entirely from HKB”H.

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