

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Succos*



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Succos

## G-t's Numen

The day after Yom Kippur is called G-t's *numen*, "Hashem's name" (ג-ט'ס נאמען). What is the reason for this title?

1) The Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* explains that for ten days, we've been saying המלך הקדוש, and now we resume saying Hashem's name, הא"ל הקדוש. Therefore, this day is called G-t's *numen*, "Hashem's name."

2) Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* offered another explanation:

On Yom Kippur, the nation heard the *kohen gadol* say the *shem hameforash* (Hashem's name הוי"ה, as it is written). This was the only day of the year that they heard Hashem's name.

The *Yerushalmi* (*Yoma* 3:7) teaches that everyone forgot how to pronounce the name immediately after Yom Kippur. The pronunciation of Hashem's name must remain a secret, known only to a select few (see *Kiddushin* 71.), so it was miraculously immediately forgotten. On the morning after Yom Kippur, people asked, "Do you remember how the *kohen gadol* pronounced Hashem's name?" but no one remembered. And since everyone was speaking about G-t's *numen*, the day after Yom Kippur is called G-t's *numen*.

3) Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zy'a* heard a *melamed* say to a young child, "When you see two yuds in the Chumash or the siddur, that is Hashem's name."

When the *melamed* reached the end of the *pasuk*, 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 סוף פסוק, a separator between one *pasuk* and the next."

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

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zt'l* repeated this story and said: After Yom Kippur, everyone is cleansed from sin, so all Yidden are on the same level. That's two yuds side by side, and Hashem's name is there. Therefore, the day after Yom Kippur is called G-t's *numen*, because everyone feels equal, and Hashem's name is there.<sup>1</sup>

## From Yom Kippur to Succos

We don't fast or say *tachanun* on the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos. What is so unique about these days?

The Magen Avraham (624:7) writes, "The four days between Yom Kippur and Succos are a joyous time because Shlomo HaMelech celebrated the Chanukas HaMizbeiach [for building the first Beis HaMikdash] during these days " (see *Malachim* 1, 8:65).

They are also happy days because the atonement of Yom Kippur extends and continues until Succos, and we are clean

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1. The first day of Succos is called יום ראשון לחשבון עונות, the first day of counting the sins, because the purity from 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 אל תביאי רגל גאווה, "don't bring me to arrogance." When taking the *esrog*, we pray that we should always remain equal with all Yidden and stay pure from sin.

from all aveiros. It states (Vayikra 23:40) ולקחתם ביום הראשון "Take [the lulav] on the first day." The Midrash (Tanchuma Emor 22) asks, why is the first day of Succos called "the first day"? It isn't the first day. It's the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Tishrei!

The Midrash answers, יום ראשון לחשבון עוונות, "It's the first day for reckoning *aveiros*..." This is because the *kaparah* of Yom Kippur continues until the first day of Succos.

The Midrash explains, "Yidden take the [four minim] on the first day of Succos, and they praise Hakadosh Baruch Hu for forgiving them. Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires His nation, He forgives them, and Hashem tells them, 'I forgave all your past *aveiros*, but now begins a new *cheshbon*.'"

The Shlah Hakadosh (Succah, Torah Or, 2) writes, "During the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, the Jewish nation is busy serving Hashem. They build the *succah*, they buy the four *minim*, and they prepare for Yom Tov עם התעוררות הלב, with an inspired soul." Their occupation with the mitzvos "with an inspired soul" purifies them.

There are 365 days in a solar year, as well the word השטן is gematriya 364. The Gemara (Yoma 20.) explains, "For 364 days the Satan has permission to speak against us, but on Yom Kippur, he doesn't have permission."

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz zt'l (Yaaras Dvash 2:10) points out that שטן is generally written without the ה' as a prefix. שטן (without the ה') is gematriya 359. This indicates that the Satan can speak slander on the Jewish nation 359 days a year. There are six days a year that the Satan can't slander us. These are: Yom Kippur, the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, and the first day of Succos.

It states (Tehillim 60:8), אלקים דיבר בקדשו אעלוז, אהלקה שכם ועמק סוכות אמדד. Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zt'l translates the *posuk* as follows: אעלוז – אלקים דיבר בקדשו, Hashem said, ה', I will rejoice with the five days of atonement, which are Yom Kippur and the four days until Succos.

אהלקה שכם I divide these five days, שכם gematriya 360. Hashem says אהלקה שכם "I divide these five days from the 360 days of the year." They are not the same as the rest of the year, because on these days we are clean from all aveiros.

The final words of the pasuk are ועמק סוכות אמדד. Rebbe Yissachar Dov explains that סוכות אמדד refers to the measurements of a succah. The measurements equal 360 tefachim because a *succah* may be tall, up to 20 *amos* high, and each amah is comprised of 6 tefachim. There need to be at least three walls. So, the equation is  $20 \times 6 \times 3 = 360$ .

The pasuk tells us how to be *zoche* to a year of holiness. The five days (from Yom Kippur and Succos) are days of atonement which through them, even the 360 days of the year can be sanctified with ועמק סוכות אמדד, the measurements of the *succah*. The 360 *tefachim* of the succah projects holiness to the 360 days of the year, so the entire year will be holy.

Rebbe Yissacher Dov's son, Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt'l, added that this is the intention of the *pasuk* (Tehillim 39:6), הנה מפחות נתתה ימי, 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 *cheder* children. Rav Pappa asked Abaya, 'And what about my Torah, and what about your Torah? Isn't our Torah sufficient to give life to the world?'"

"Abaya replied, 'We can't compare the voice [of a child] who never tasted sin to the voice of someone who tasted sin.'" Young children never experienced the taste of sin; therefore, their Torah is so precious to Hashem, and their Torah study sustains the world.

The Kozeglover Rav zt'l (Eretz Zvi) writes that when an adult studies Torah during the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, his Torah learning will also sustain the world because on these days, he is clean from sin. It is even better than when a child studies

Torah because an adult is a מצווה ועושה, obligated to study Torah (while a child isn't). The value of an obligatory mitzvah is greater than a mitzvah performed voluntarily. We can earn this merit when we study Torah on these days.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* was extremely happy between Yom Kippur and Succos, to the extent that he couldn't focus on studying Torah, so, instead, on these days, he composed songs and poems to express his yearning and gratitude to Hashem (collected in *Sefer Shiras Moshe*).

We aren't on that level; we can study Torah on the four days after Yom Kippur, and therefore, we should! Our studies at this time will sustain the entire world.

It states (*Yeshayah 55*) דרשו ה' בהמצאו, "Search for Hashem when He is near. The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah 18*) asks, "When is Hashem nearby? 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 only seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur; why does the Gemara say that there are ten days?

The Shlah answers that the Gemara hints at the ten days between *Yom Kippur* and *Hoshanah Rabba*. These are the days that Hashem is nearby.

Yom Kippur is called Rosh Hashanah<sup>2</sup> and Hoshanah Rabba is called Yom Kippur.<sup>3</sup> Between them, there are ten days. About these days it states, דרשו ה' בהמצאו, "Search Hashem when He is near."

### Preparing for *Yom Tov*

Chasidim say, "Preparing for a mitzvah is greater than performing the mitzvah."

This is a surprising idea, but there are proofs to this concept.

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* (*Ha'azinu 5634*) proves it from the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos. The sefarim say that the atonement of Yom Kippur continues into these four days because these are the days that we build the succah, buy the four minim, and prepare for the yom tov. When Succos arrives, and we are actually performing these mitzvos, we no longer have the same purity from sin. It states ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון, "You shall take [the four minim] on the first day..." Chazal explain that it is the first day לחשבון עוונות, for counting the aveiros. It is the first day we have sins again.

We see from this that preparing for the mitzvos grants us more taharah than the actual performance of the mitzvos.<sup>4</sup> The reason is that Hashem's enjoyment from the mitzvos is mostly from the desire of the heart, the will to do His will. And this is often experienced more during the preparation for the mitzvos.<sup>5</sup>

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

3. This is because on Hoshanah Rabba we receive the חתימה טובה a good seal for the new year.

4. The Taz (beginning of 581) asks why should preparing for a mitzvah bring more atonement than the actual performance of the mitzvah. According to the Sfas Emes, it is because the preparation is greater than the mitzvah itself.

5. Reb Chaim Vital (*Hakdamah l'Shaar HaMitzvos*) *zt'l* writes, "When you perform a mitzvah, don't consider it a burden that you want to finish quickly and 'get over with.' Rather, when you perform mitzvos, be happy with an endless joy, as if you were given millions of gold coins for performing this mitzvah."

When soldiers train for battle, the military doesn't provide live ammunition because that would be a waste of valuable resources. The soldiers can practice with blanks. But when going to war, obviously the weapons must be loaded with live ammunition. A soldier that goes to the front without proper ammunition will be captured by the enemy, who will laugh at his incompetence. The Kedushas Levi (*Likutim Avos, ד"ה אם למודת*) tells

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* provides another proof of the enormity of preparing for the mitzvos. Every night of Succos (besides for Shabbos and Yom Tov), there was a great celebration in the Beis HaMikdash with music and immense joy, as they celebrated the mitzvah of נִסּוּךְ הַמִּים, pouring water on the *mizbeiach*, which is a mitzvah specifically for Succos.

Most of the celebrations took place when they were preparing for the mitzvah, such as when they drew the water from the spring and brought it to the Beis HaMikdash. However, not much joy was expressed when the mitzvah itself was performed and water was poured on the *mizbeiach*. This shows us that preparing for a mitzvah is greater than doing the mitzvah.

Chazal say, "Whoever didn't see the joy of the *simchas beis hashoeivah*, never saw joy in his lifetime." And Chazal say that people drew (שואבה) *ruach hakodesh* at this celebration.

The Gemara doesn't say that they drew *ruach hakodesh* from the mitzvah itself, only from the celebrations before the mitzvah, when they were *preparing* for the mitzvah.

Chazal say (*Yoma* 29), הרהורי עבירה קשין מעבירה, "Thinking about an *aveirah* is worse than doing the *aveirah*." The worst part of an *aveirah* is the preparation for the *aveirah*, the thinking about the *aveirah*, planning on

how to perform it. The Sfas Emes (בחוקת) (תרמ"ד) writes that just as thinking about an *aveirah* is worse than the *aveirah*, similarly, thinking about the mitzvos is greater than the mitzvah itself. "The correction of the soul comes from thinking and desiring to serve Hashem."

It states (*Hosheia* 14:10), צדיקים ילכו בם ופושעים יכשלו בם. The *pasuk* can be connected to this concept that *tzaddikim* prepare for the mitzvos, but the *resha'im*, יכשלו בם, just fall into the mitzvah, without any prior preparation. Hashem wants our preparation.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Erev Succos***

Rebbe Chaim of Sanz *zt'l* was always very generous with the poor.<sup>7</sup> Every day, he distributed a lot of *tzedakah*. But on *erev Succos*, he increased his *tzedakah* by distributing large amounts of money to the poor. He said that there isn't a nicer נוי סוכה, *succah* decoration than the *tzedakah* one gives on *erev Succos*.

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

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this *meshal* to explain what happens when a person serves Hashem without *hislahavos* and joy. "According to the extent of his *hislahavos*, that is how distant he becomes from *gashmiyos*, and the level of awareness of Hashem he can attain. But if he performs the mitzvos by rote, without *hislahavos*, he is like a soldier that doesn't load his weapons when he goes to war."

6. Some buy an *esrog pushka* (a silver *esrog* box) as a gift for a *chasan*. This *hidur mitzvah* (glorification of the mitzvah) is different than most *hidur mitzvah* because it isn't directly related to the mitzvah.

For example, a silver Chanukah menorah becomes part of the mitzvah. A silver *becher* for *kiddush* and *havdalah* becomes part of the mitzvah. It is a nicer mitzvah when performed in a beautiful manner. But a 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 by how much he prepares *before* performing the mitzvah, and by how much joy he feels *after* the mitzvah.

7. He wasn't born this way. He said that he was born with a stingy nature, but by working on himself, he became very generous with the poor. He said that if there is a poor person who he can't help, he feels like his own skin is being torn.

### Take Advantage of the Days

Moshe Rabbeinu was on Har Sinai for forty days (actually, for 120 days, three times forty) without sleep. The Midrash (Shemos Rabba 47:7) writes, "How do we know that Moshe didn't sleep during these days? We can compare it to a king who said to someone he loved, 'Measure gold coins and take them for yourself.' The man was so happy; he didn't ask to eat or drink. When he was tired, he said, 'If I sleep, I will lose out.' Similarly, Moshe was "measuring" Torah and forgot to eat and drink. When he wanted to sleep, he said, 'If I sleep, I will lose out.'"

The Sfas Emes (5634) quotes this Midrash and explains that this is the reason Chazal (Succah 53.) tells us, "When we were in the Beis HaMikdash all night, celebrating the Simchas Beis HaShoeivah we didn't fall asleep." This is because we knew that if we slept, we would miss out.

The Beis Yisrael zt'l would often repeat this vort from the Sfas Emes, and explain that when it is Yom Tov, we need to take advantage of the time. We should feel that every moment is precious, and it is a shame to waste a moment.

The halachah is that if there is a three tefach air space (אוויר) in the schach, it deems the succah pasul. However, if there is non-kosher schach there, it becomes pasul only when there are four tefachim of the pasul schach (see Shulchan Aruch 632:1-2). The Kotzker zt'l and Reb Yechezkel of Kozmir zt'l explain that we are more machmir when there is no schach at all (אוויר) because nothingness is the worst. בטלה, wasting time is the worst situation. Better to learn Torah and to do mitzvos, even not lishmah, than to do nothing at all.

Chol hamoed is also a special time and shouldn't be spent with emptiness. The

Shem MiShmuel (Shabbos Chol HaMoed Pesach 5673) writes, "Every moment of the holiday one should prepare himself to accept the holiness that is coming down without stop."

The Mishnah (Avos 3:11) says very severe things regarding המבזה את המועדות, someone who disgraces Yom Tov. It warns that such a person doesn't have a portion in Olam HaBa. The Rabbeinu Yonah explains that this refers to when one doesn't honor Chol Hamoed. He writes, "It says המבזה (disgraces), and not המהלל (desecrates) because the mishnah isn't discussing Yom Tov. The Mishnah doesn't need to discuss Yom Tov because Yom Tov is like Shabbos. Rather, it refers to Chol Hamoed. He disgraces Chol Hamoed by saying that these days don't have kedushah like the first days."

There is special kedushah on Shabbos Chol Hamoed. The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explains that Shabbos is made up of the days of the week. Shabbos Chol HaMoed is made up of days of Yom Tov, so the Shabbos is all the more exalted.

### Ushpizen

The Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah writes, "*Erev Succos* is the time to distribute tzedakah. It is also the day to seek proper guests, *b'nei Torah*, for the *Yom Tov*."

It is important to host guests on Succos.

The *Zohar* teaches that the seven *ushpizen*, Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, and Dovid come to our *succos* to celebrate with us. When they arrive, they check to see if there are any guests. If there are guests, they remain in the *succah* and bless all the participants. But if there are no guests, they leave. Therefore, it is important to have guests on Succos.<sup>8</sup>

Rebbe Eliezer of Dzikov zt'l was extra cautious to have a guest on the first day of

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8. The Gemara (*Avodah Zorah* 3) tells us that in the future, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu rewards the Jewish nation, the nations of the world will request another chance to keep the Torah. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will respond, "I have a simple mitzvah; it is called *succah*. Keep this mitzvah [and you will be rewarded]".

Succos because it's the *ushpizen* of Avraham Avinu, and Avraham excelled in *hachnassas orchim*.

One year, Reb Eliezer of Dzikov didn't have a guest for the first day of Succos, so he asked his son (the Imrei Noam *zt'l*) to go outside to find a guest, someone who needed a meal. So the son walked around the streets until he found a homeless man, the type of person people generally don't want in their home. "Come with me," he said to the poor man. "My father invites you to eat his Yom Tov *seudah* with him."

The Dzikover Rebbe was thrilled with his guest and served him the meal. He then 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."

### Unity

The Jewish nation should be united with love and oneness. They shouldn't feel divided and separated from other Yidden and other communities. After the *kaparah* that we attained on Yom Kippur, it is easier for the Yidden to experience this unity. The *Sfas Emes* (*Yom Kippur* 651) explains, "The *neshamos* of all Yidden are united; it is sin

that pulls people apart." After Yom Kippur, we don't have *aveiros*, and all Yidden can have *ahavas Yisrael* and unity without any feelings of division.

The mitzvos of Succos represent the feelings of unity that we have on these days.

For example, it states, *כל האזרח בישראל ישבו בסוכות* and the Gemara (*Succah* 27) explains, "all Yidden can dwell in the same *succah*." At times of discord, people will say, "I don't want to sit with him. I can't be with him at the same table." But on Succos, all Yidden can eat in the same *succah*. They can be together under the same roof with peace and unity.

The Midrash (*VaYikra Rabba* 30:12) teaches that the *esrog*, *lulav*, *hadasim*, and *aravos* represent all levels of Yidden, from the *tzaddikim* (represented by the *esrog*) to those standing at low levels (represented by the *aravah* that have neither taste nor smell). They are all tied together to perform a *mitzvah* because they need one another. The *aravos* (the lower Yidden) need to be close to the *esrog* (to the *tzaddikim*) because their connection with *tzaddikim* grant them atonement.

*Tzaddikim* also need to be connected to the lower people because they aren't complete on their own. We prove this from the *Beer Heitev* (645:9), who writes, "אתרוג is

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The Gemara relates, "Immediately, they will all go up and build a *succah* on their rooftops, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu will make the sun shine brightly, making it extremely hot, and they will kick their *succos* and leave."

The Gemara explains that although Yidden also leave the *succah* when it's very hot, for the halachah is, *במצטער פטור מן הסוכה*, someone who is in distress is exempt from *succah*, but a Yid never kicks the *succah* when he leaves. The nations of the world will kick the *succah* in disdain, and therefore, they don't deserve reward.

*B'derech tzachus* we can explain that they build their *succos* specifically on their rooftops because they don't want people knocking at their door, asking for a meal. Contrarily, the Jewish nation seeks to have guests on Succos.

We can also explain this Chazal as follows:

The hot sun represents the hardships of life, and the *succah* represents belief in Hashem. The non-Jews agree to have *emunah* in Hashem when everything goes well. But when things 'heat up', which represents hard times, they kick the *succah*. They no longer believe in Hashem.

The Jewish nation, on the other hand, believes and trusts in Hashem under all circumstances.

*gematriya* 610. When combined with the other 3 species, the *gematriya* is 613." Perfection is when all four categories of Yidden unite.<sup>9</sup>

Many people in Yerushalayim would bring their four *minim* to Reb Shimon Aharon Polonski *zt'l*, the Tepliker Rav, to ask whether they were kosher and *mehudar* for the mitzvah. In return for this service, he asked them to donate money to the poor of Yerushalayim so that he could help them with the Yom Tov expenses.

One person told him, "After I pay for the four *minim*, I won't have money left to help the poor."

The Tepliker Rav told him, "Who says you have to buy four *minim*? You can borrow the four *minim* from someone. However, if a poor family is sad on Yom Tov because they couldn't afford to buy a meal, and if they shed even just one tear, that creates a *kitrug* in heaven which is very hard to amend."

One year, on the first day of Succos, the Tepliker Rav asked someone to lend him his *esrog* because he didn't have his own.

This is what happened:

*Erev* Succos, the Tepliker Rav heard shouts and cries from his neighbor's home and was concerned. He knew this family had lost their father, and there were young

orphans at home. The mother had remarried, but things weren't going so smoothly.

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

The Tepliker Rav understood that the stepfather might rebuke the orphan harshly for breaking the *pitom*, and he might also be angry with his wife for allowing the child to look at the *esrog*. The Tepliker Rav told them, "I will give you another *esrog*. You don't have to tell him what happened. Just say that I asked to see his *esrog*, and I ruled it was *pasul*, so I gave you another *esrog*."

It was the Tepliker Rav's own *esrog*. He gave it away to help this family. Someone else's *shalom bayis* and *simchas Yom Tov* were more important to him than owning his own four *minim*, and as he would tell others, he would use someone else's *esrog* to perform the *mitzvah*.

Throughout the year, Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz *zt'l* would put aside money to buy the four *minim*. One year, as he walked to the *esrog* merchant to buy an *esrog*, he saw a simple Yid crying bitterly. He asked him what his problem was.

The man told him that he was a delivery man, and his horse was his source of

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9. The simple people earn their keep due to their connection with tzaddikim. Therefore, it is important for the simple people to be among tzaddikim, to listen to their rules, and to feel associated with them.

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

Rebbe Meir replied, "Certainly, we should unite. That is the ideal situation. However, when the resham group together among themselves and distance themselves from the tzaddikim, they are like a bunch of *aravos*. We hit them and we bang them until their souls depart..."

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

parnassah, but his horse died. "I don't have money to buy another horse," he said.

Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz had a pouch of money with him. He was taking it to the *esrog* merchant. He decided to give a large portion of the money to this Yid so that he could buy a new horse. With the leftover money, he would buy an *esrog* of lesser perfection.

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..."

That Succos, Rebbe Mordechai davened in the beis medresh of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l*. Rebbe Elimelech said, "I smell the scent of Gan Eden coming from your

*esrog*" and Rebbe Mordechai told him the story of how he was *moser nefesh* to help his fellow man. That merit brought a scent of Gan Eden in his simple-looking *esrog*.

### Staying Focused

The Gemara (*Succah* 3) teaches that ראשו ורובו ושולחנו בתוך הסוכה, one's head, most of his body, and his table need to be inside the *succah*. He can't be partially in the *succah*, and mostly out of the *succah*. Even his table needs to be in the *succah*. The Sfas Emes explains that this *halachah* hints at the spirit with which we should perform this holy mitzvah. We must be totally involved with the mitzvah, happy with it, and thinking about it. His heart, mind, and soul should be in the *succah*. He shouldn't sit in the *succah*; his head and heart elsewhere.<sup>10</sup>

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10. A person driving a new Mercedes car approached a border crossing. The border police inspected his luggage to see whether he was smuggling merchandise across the border, and all they found were buckets of soil.

"What's this for?" they asked.

"I'm building a new house, and earth good for building is cheaper in the other country. So, I go there and fill up my buckets with dirt, so I can build by home."

The officers didn't believe him. It made no sense that a well-to-do person would import soil just to save a few pennies. So, they sifted through the earth expecting to find hidden contraband, but found anything, so they let him pass.

The following day, the same gentleman pulled up to the border again in his shiny Mercedes. The custom officials, once again, sifted through his soil, and sent him on his way when they couldn't find anything. This happened every day for a long time. After a while, once they realized that he wasn't bringing in anything besides earth, they stopped searching him and just waved him on.

One day, he came to the border with his buckets of earth and told the guards that he won't be coming anymore. "I'm just about finished building my house, so there's no reason for me to bring any more earth."

The border police couldn't contain their curiosity any longer. They said, "Tell us the real reason you carried dirt over the border every day? Whatever you say, we won't hold against you. We just can't believe that you did this to save a few pennies on the earth."

"If you promise you won't arrest me, I will tell you", he replied.

They promised, and he said, "I imported a huge fleet of brand-new Mercedes cars tax-free! You thought I was driving the same car every day, but it wasn't. Every day, I drove a new Mercedes. The soil was just a coy, to distract you from what was happening under your noses."

The *nimshal* is, there is a lot to focus on these days. We can focus on being happy, on the greatness of the mitzvos, on the lessons of the mitzvos. But then something trivial happens, and people turn their focus to that matter. We must remember that we don't have time for that. There are great things to accomplish now.

The table represents his family. The head of the family must make sure that his wife and children are also totally enthralled with the Yom Tov and its mitzvos.

The Torah (Vayikra 33:42-43) writes, בסוכות תשבו שבעת ימים... למען ידעו דורותיכם כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים " For a seven-day period you shall live in the succah... so that your [ensuing] generations should know that I had Bnei Yisrael live in succos when I took them out of the land of Mitzrayim."

The Bach teaches from this pasuk that just like one is obligated to sit in the succah, he must think about the reason he is sitting in succah. It isn't sufficient to think, "This is Hashem's will. I am performing Hashem's mitzvah." That thought is adequate for most mitzvos of the Torah,<sup>11</sup> but this time the Torah explicitly tells us that we should think about the reason for the mitzvah. The Torah says the purpose of the succah is to remind us that Hashem had us sit in succos<sup>12</sup> when we left Mitzrayim.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (625:1) states, "When one sits in the *succah* he should think that [this mitzvah is to] remind us of *yetzias Mitzrayim* and to remember the ענני כבוד, the

clouds of glory, which Hashem wrapped us in in the desert to protect us from the cold and heat. One should think these thoughts, and in this manner, he will be keeping the mitzvah properly. However, *bidi'eved*, one has accomplished the mitzvah even if his only thought is that he is performing a 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 hear the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. But on Succos, it is important to consider why we have this mitzvah.

This is because one should keep the mitzvah of *succah* with his whole being. He should think about what he is doing and be connected to the mitzvos.

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

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Here's another mashal:

Someone was praising his doctor, that there was perfect air-conditioning in the office, the waiting room is beautifully decorated, the waiting time isn't long, and the price was good.

His friend interrupted, "And what about the doctor? Is he a good doctor? Are the patients happy with him?"

"The truth is, I never heard that anyone was happy with him. I am also not so happy with him, and I am considering going to another doctor. But I'm telling you, his office is first-class!"

The *nimshal* is: The *succah* will be beautifully decorated, the four *minim* will be the most precious set. The externals are very good, but it is important to make the mitzvos perfect internally, too. We do so by performing the mitzvos with joy and by staying focused on what is important on these days.

**11.** There are endless reasons for the mitzvos, and some of them were revealed by the tzaddikim over the generations. It is a mitzvah to think about the reasons of the mitzvos while performing them. That elevates the mitzvos to a higher level, but it isn't an obligation to think about the reasons. Succah is an exception. One is obligated to think the reason of the mitzvah because the Torah tells to perform the mitzvah with this intention.

**12.** The Gemara (Succah 11:) has two explanations what succos means. One is ענני כבוד, the clouds of glory with which Hashem protected us in when we were in the desert. Or succos means סוכות ממש, literal succos, like what we have on succos.

This applies to all the mitzvos (and not solely succah). The sefarim give many *taamim* and ideas that will inspire us to understand the greatness of each mitzvah, and it is fitting to review these ideas so that we can keep the mitzvos with passion and wholeheartedly. Otherwise, one is liable of keeping the mitzvos by rote. The Meiri writes: "If a person eats matzah on Pesach and sits in a *succah* [on Succos], he is like a donkey that carries wheat during the wheat harvest and grapes during the grape harvest season...."

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

"The simple folk who don't know the reasons for the mitzvos should keep the mitzvos with inspiration – to the extent that their limited knowledge enables them. They

should think that they are doing Hashem's will Who commanded them to honor Him."<sup>13</sup>

### The Four *Minim*

The Beis Yosef (651) tells the following story:

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

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zy'a* adds that although the four letters must 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*. They are together, but a little space is there because the four

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

A gentile child was murdered, and false witnesses were hired to testify in court that a Jew killed the child to use his blood to bake matzos.

The Yidden explained to the judge that these were false witnesses, and the judge suspected that it was so. However, even after cross examining the witnesses, the witnesses didn't contradict each other. The lives of all Yidden in the area were in danger.

One wise Yid said to the judge, "Nowadays, there is a new method to determine who is guilty. Modern courts use trained bloodhounds. The dog smells the blood of the murdered victim and is able to determine who is the murderer."

The judge agreed to put it to test. The judge ordered all the townspeople to gather in the town square. (The Yidden were also there, with their *Tehillims* in hands, praying for a miracle.) The judge had a dog smell the blood-stained clothing, and then the dog went directly to the true murderer.

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

Reb Eliyah Lopian noted, "The dog didn't know that it saved the Jewish community from a pogrom. It only knew how to smell blood and to go to the person with the same scent. However, when we keep the mitzvos (succah, lulav, etc.) we *should* know what we're doing."

*minim* represent the letters of Hashem's name יהו"ה.

The Midrash (quoted in *Ramban Vayikra* 23:40) states: "The *esrog* is Hakadosh Baruch Hu, as it states..." and the Midrash brings a pasuk to prove this. "The *lulav* is Hakadosh Baruch Hu as it states... *Hadassim* are Hakadosh Baruch Hu... The *aravos* are Hakadosh Baruch Hu..." This Midrash corresponds with the concept that 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, He teaches, ה' לי, "Since Hashem is with me [as I hold the four *minim*] לא אירא, I have nothing to fear."<sup>14</sup>

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 explained that he loves the mitzvah and holding them helps him daven with greater *kavanah*. The Chasam Sofer said that he has more *kavanah* on Succos while holding the four *minim* than he has on Yom Kippur."

The Midrash teaches that the four *minim* represent the human body: The *esrog* represents the heart, the *lulav* the spine, the *hadassim* the eyes, and the *aravah* the mouth.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that when you want to awaken someone, you shake them. Similarly, we shake the four

*minim*, which represents the person, to awaken him to *ruchniyus*. On Shabbos we don't need to take the four *minim*, because Shabbos awakens us.

The Shevet 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 and dry. And, indeed, that is the *segulah* of the four *minim* to awaken us so we can serve Hashem with a *chiyus* and vigor.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Esrog***

Tzaddikim said that if people knew the value of the *esrog*, they would spend all the money in the world to acquire it.<sup>16</sup>

The Gemara (*Succah* 41) tells us that Raban Gamliel once paid one thousand *zuz* for an *esrog*. "This teaches us how much they loved the mitzvos."

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

One year, there were very few *esrogim*, so the Vilna Gaon *zt'l* gave a couple of his

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

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

16. The Torah mentions *esrog* first, as it states פרי עץ הדר וכפות תמר, etc., while the Mishnayos (*Succah* ch.3) mentions the laws of *esrog* last. The Mishnah first discusses the laws of the *lulav*, *hadassim*, and *aravos*. Why did it change the order?

Chazal tell us that the *esrog* represents the heart, the *lulav* the spine, the *hadassim* the eyes, and *aravos* the lips. The Mishnah is revealing that if you want to have a pure heart, begin with being cautious with your eyes, speech, and all your deeds. When they will be pure, your heart will be pure and devoted to Hashem.

students a large sum of money and told them to seek an esrog.

The students searched hard, but there wasn't anything available. Finally, they found someone who had an *esrog*. However, this man wasn't an esrog merchant; he wanted the esrog for himself. The students offered him a lot of money, but he refused to part from his *esrog*.

They explained to him that they needed it for the Vilna Gaon. So he agreed to sell it to them on the condition that he would be accredited with the reward for the mitzvah.

The students feared that the Vilna Gaon wouldn't be happy with this condition, but as they didn't have another esrog, they agreed to those terms.

The Vilna Gaon was extremely happy when he heard about the condition. He explained that this was his opportunity to perform the mitzvah entirely *leshmah*. He won't be getting Olam HaBa for the mitzvah, so his only gain and intention will be to make a *nachas ruach* for Hashem.

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

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

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zt'l* was very poor. Sometimes, his children went hungry. But there was nothing the family was able to

do. There was no money in the home. Actually, there was one item of value. It was an inheritance- the holy tefillin of Reb Michel Zlotchever's father, Reb Yitzchak of Derohovitz *zt'l*, but Reb Michel refused to sell them.

His Rebbetzin *zt'l* pleaded many times that he sell the tefillin to support their family, but Reb Michel refused. Once, a wealthy person came to Zlotchev and offered a lot of money for the tefillin, but Rebbe Michel turned down the offer. "My father's tefillin aren't for sale," he explained simply.

But then came a year when there were hardly any esrogim in Eastern Europe. An esrog merchant came to Zlotchev with an esrog, but he asked for a lot of money. Reb Michel sold the tefillin and bought the esrog for fifty *reinish*. Rebbe Michel's joy was endless. He had a beautiful *esrog* for yom tov.

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

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

That night, he saw his father in his dream. His father told him that it was a great deed when he sold the tefillin to buy the esrog, but his second deed, that he controlled his anger, was an even greater accomplishment. His father said, "Your ability to control your anger was more precious in heaven than your *mesirus nefesh* to buy the *esrog*. In the merit of your restraint, many *gezeiros raos* [harsh decrees] were annulled."<sup>17</sup>

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17. In one town, one wealthy miser refused to contribute in the esrog collection. He would say, "The esrog will be bought regardless. If there isn't enough money, the wealthy rosh hakahal will certainly pay the difference. So, why should I part from my hard-earned money to buy it?"

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

"Why did they listen to me?" The Satan replies. "They are a wise nation, and they should have ignored my enticements."

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

A few days later, they buy an esrog, a citrus fruit with a retail value of a few cents, and they pay a lot of money for it. The malachim say, "Just see how easily they are tricked."

So, the Satan remains guilty for their sins, and they are signed for a good year.

The Berdichiver Rav *zt'l* relates that he once saw the Satan and asked him why he appeared so sad.

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

Sometime later, the Berdichever Rav found the Satan, and this time the Satan was happy. "Why are you so happy?" the Bardichever Rav asked. "Just a while ago, you were sad because a shipload of *esrogim* was arriving."

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

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He didn't understand that as he was wealthier than most people in the town, he should give a larger portion.

The esrog merchant saw that the town's people were slow with coming up with the money, and he warned them that if they don't pay the full price, he would take the esrog elsewhere.

The wealthy rosh hakahal paid the difference, and they managed to buy the esrog. The four *minim* were kept in the rosh hakahal's home because he paid the lion's share of the purchase. Yom tov morning, the townspeople lined up in front of the rosh hakahal's home for a turn to shake the four *minim*. The wealthy miser was also in line. When it was his turn, the rosh hakahal refused to give him the four *minim*. "We almost didn't have this mitzvah because of your misery, so you don't deserve it."

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

Later that same morning, the rosh hakahal was walking to the beis medresh to daven shacharis and to shake the four *minim* by Hallel. The wealthy miser ran over to the rosh hakahal shouted the brachos על נשילת לולב and שדהיינו, and he lifted the rosh hakahal, and shook him to all six sides. He so desired to perform this mitzvah, and he realized this was his only chance. The rav of the community saw this and convinced 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. One merciful *malach* said, "Did we place the four *minim* that he shook on the scale?"

"We did," the court replied, "and we placed his shame on the scale, too (because he felt humiliated when the *rosh hakahal* didn't permit him to shake *lulav*), but it still isn't sufficient. The scale is still tipped to the side of guilt."

The *malach* said, "We should also put on the scale the weight of the *rosh hakahal*, because he raised the *rosh hakahal* to keep the mitzvah."

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

Chol HaMoed Succos, the Satan was sad again. The Berdichever Rav asked him what the cause for his sadness was."

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

### ושמחת בהוגך - *Simchah*

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

*Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 529:2) states, "A person is obligated to be happy and in a good mood on Yom Tov. So too, are his wife and children. So how does he make the family happy? By giving the children nuts and roasted grains [or other kinds of foods that children enjoy], and by buying clothing and jewelry for the women according to one's abilities."

In Yerushalayim, there was a jewelry store next door to a shop that sells esrogim and lulavim, etc. A scholar entered the jewelry store, and a simple person entered the four-minim shop. They met outside the stores, each carrying their purchase in hand. The simple person said, "I made a much better purchase than you because I bought a mitzvah."

The scholar replied, "You bought a mitzvah *derabanan* (because that year, the first day of Succos was Shabbos, and lulav on the other six days of Succos are m'd'Rabbanan), while I bought a mitzvah de'oraysa. I bought my wife jewelry, and there is a mitzvah from the Torah to make my wife (and the family) happy on Yom Tov."

The biblical mitzvah of Simcha applies to all seven/eight days of Succos, including Chol Hamoed. On the other hand, Lulav is a Torah obligation only on the first day of Succos. The Imrei Noam zt'l explains that this is because Hashem loves when His nation is happy, therefore He made this mitzvah for seven days.

So, we now understand that being happy on Succos isn't merely a good idea, a chassidic concept, and the like. It's an obligation from the Torah, and fortunate are those who toil to keep this important, though difficult, mitzvah.<sup>18</sup>

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18. The Tzemech Tzedek (Lubavitz) zt'l said that one should daven for *simchah*. Dovid HaMelech did so, as it states (*Tehillim* 86:4) שמח נפש עבדך "Gladden your servant's soul."

Also, believe that everything that happens is from Hashem. Everything is exactly as it should be, and for our good. So why should you be upset?

Someone came to Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt'l, bemoaning his plight in life. Reb Shlomo Zalman told him about a person who suffers a lot more than him, yet he is always happy. He said, "This Yid had a surgery, and ever since then, he is deaf in one ear. He is also a widower, r'l. Three of his children never had children of their own. Despite all his troubles, he is always happy; he always has a smile on his face."

The man replied, "I can't believe that there is such a person in the world. How can he be happy, after suffering so much?"

Reb Shlomo Zalman replied that he was referring to himself. Because when one knows that everything is planned by Hashem, he is always happy.

The Alter of Slabodka zt'l said: When the Rambam leaves out a halachah from his sefer, talmidei chachamim search to understand the reason the Rambam left it out. They don't just say that the Rambam overlooked

### Reasons for Happiness on Succos

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

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

The Shlah (סוכה נר מצוה סוף אות ט) writes, "A person must be happy every day [of Succos], his face should beam with joy because of the holy Ushpizin who dwell with him."

We are also happy on Succos because of all the mitzvos we perform on this Yom Tov. In *Hilchos Lulav* (8:15), the Rambam writes, "The joy that one has when he performs mitzvos is a great service, and whoever refrains deserves to be punished."

When we are happy on Succos, our happiness will remain with us the entire year. Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl *zy'a* said that Succos is called זמן שמחתנו and a

translation of זמן is to prepare. On Succos, we prepare and store up simchah for the entire year.

It states, ושמחת בחגך... והיית אך שמח, and the Abarbanel writes, "This *pasuk* is a guarantee: If you are happy on Succos, you will be joyous the entire year."

The Ibn Ezra on the *pasuk* ושמחת בחגך (Devarim 16: 14-16) also writes that if we are happy on Succos, we are blessed to be happy forever.

The Pela Yoetz zt'l writes, "We are commanded to be happy, and this becomes a good omen (*siman*) for the entire year. The Arizal's students write that someone who is joyous and has a happy heart, without any distress, on this holy holiday, it is certain that he will have a good year, and he will be happy throughout the year."<sup>19</sup>

Rashi (Bamidbar 29:18) writes that the ninety-eight sheep sacrificed on Succos<sup>20</sup> annul the ninety-eight curses written in parashas Ki Savo.

The ninety-eight klalos of parashas Ki Savo came about because (Devarim 28:47) תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה Hashem with joy." The Arizal says that we should understand this literally. The curses

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writing the halachah, and it happened by mistake. They are certain that the Rambam omitted it intentionally, and they study the subject in depth to understand why. So, when something is missing in your life – *parnassah*, or any other matter – why do you think it is a mistake, and that it shouldn't be that way? Why don't you believe that it was done purposely, for a reason?

We make the *brachah* on the *esrog* מוטן פירות אראפ, with the *pitom* facing down. The words מוטן פירות אראפ is also an expression which people use to refer to when everything is spiraling downwards and nothing works out. But we make a *brachah* when it is מוטן פירות אראפ, because we believe that even the matters that we don't understand are for our good.

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

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

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

aren't for not serving Hashem; they are for serving Hashem without joy.

The Avnei Nezer says that on Succos, when we serve Hashem with joy, is the perfect time to annul the ninety-eight curses that came from lacking joy.

Instead of klalos we will enjoy many brachos. The Beis Aharon (p.156.) writes, "On the yomim nora'im [Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the treasures of] bounty open up for us with our fear, and on Succos they open with our joy."

The Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l* was at a chasanah to perform the mitzvah of simchas chasan v'chalah and someone asked him, "It seems that no one is as happy as a chasan and kallah, even without your efforts to make them happy? Wouldn't it be better to use your time to bring joy to those going through hard times?"

The Chozeh answered:

It is known (see Yerushalmi Bikurim 3:3) that all one's aveiros are atoned for on the day of his chasanah. The chasan and kallah are worried and concerned: How can they guarantee that they will remain pure, without sin, for the rest of their lives? So, we dance before them to make them happy. This tells them, "If you want to remain pure from sin your entire life, our counsel is: Be happy. Your joy will protect you from falling into sin."

On Yom Kippur, we become purified from all our sins, but we are worried: How can we maintain this purity after Yom Kippur? The answer is through happiness. This can be one of the reasons we have a

mitzvah to be happy on Succos. This is a tool to remain pure from sin throughout the year.<sup>21</sup>

### Proper Joy

*Shulchan Aruch* (529:3) states, "One should eat and drink and be happy on Yom Tov, but he shouldn't focus on the meat, wine, laughter, and lightheadedness, because laughter and lightheadedness aren't true joy. That's levity and foolishness. We aren't obligated to engage in levity and foolishness, only with *simchah* for Hashem's service."

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

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

The Sfas Emes explains this concept with the words והיית אך שמח. אך is coming to limit (מיעוט) something. In this case, we want only the proper joy on Yom Tov, excluding improper joy. We only want the joy that comes from or leads to a connection with Hashem.<sup>22</sup>

21. After the egel, it states (Shemos 23:4) ויתאבלו, "they mourned." The nation was sad that they committed this severe sin. After Adam and Chavah's sin it states (Breishis 3:16-17) בעצב תלדי בנים... בעצבון תאכלנו, "With sadness, you will give birth... With sadness, you will [earn your parnassah]..." We see from these sources that aveiros result in sadness.

22. People sing the song ושמחת בהגיד והיית אך שמח, and they repeat the word אך many times. *Bederech tzachus*, Reb Yosef Chaim Zonfeld *zt'l* said that this is based on the Chazal, אין מיעוט אחר מיעוט אלא לרבות, that whenever there is more than one מיעוט, limitation, expressed in the Torah, it means that we should increase rather than decrease. Therefore, we sing והיית אך שמח, and we repeat the word אך because we should increase our joy, and not decrease it at all. We should be extremely happy on the yomim tovim.

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*, frivolities. True *simchah* is when it is connected to Hashem, Torah, and mitzvos.

### **Succah – Gan Eden in this World**

The holiness of the succah is very great. It is our opportunity in this world to visit Gan Eden and Olam HaBa.

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

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

The Yaaras Dvash (vol.1 drush 6) writes, "Hovering over the succah is Hashem's cloud. Although we don't see it, it is certain and true that whoever sits in the succah *leshem shamayim* and learns Torah there and is happy with the yom tov and the mitzvos, Hashem's cloud hovers above him."<sup>23</sup>

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

sensation cannot be explained in words, but someone who experienced it knows it's true."

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

According to halachah, a succah must be made of at least two complete walls and one smaller wall, the length of a tefach. The holy sefarim explain that this represents an arm, with two large parts and the *tefach*, the hand. The succah has these dimensions because when we are in the succah, it is keviyachol like Hashem is hugging us.<sup>24</sup>

Going into the succah is like entering Hashem's innermost heavenly chambers. It states (Shir HaShirim 1:4) הביאני המלך חדריו, "The king brought me into His [innermost] chambers. נגילה ונשמחה בך, "We will rejoice with You." There is joy in the succah because it is Hashem's innermost chamber and Chazal say that after the churban Beis HaMikdash Hashem cries in His outer chambers and is happy in his innermost chambers.

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

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

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Or, it can be explained this way: אך is a מיעוט, implying that even a small amount of joy is worthwhile and an accomplishment.

Another approach is that אך is a limitation, and it refers to when things aren't good for him. The Torah says והיית אך שמח, even then shall you be happy.

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

**24.** The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* taught that Hashem treats us during these days in the same manner a mother cares for her child. On Rosh Hashanah, בלאזט מען אונז אפ, 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.

holy and has laws like the laws practiced in the Beis HaMikdash.

The Arizal teaches that one's table in the succah should have four legs to resemble the Shulchan of the Beis HaMikdash, which had four legs. (We repeat this not necessarily so people will buy a table with four legs, but rather to indicate the holiness of the succah, which resembles the Beis HaMikdash.)

Chazal consider a possibility that a succah needs to be built on Har HaBayis, next to the Beis HaMikdash. This theory is disproved in the end, in the Gemara. Nevertheless, it is known that a הוּא אֲמִינָא, an initial thought of Chazal, also has significance. This is a sign of the holiness of the succah; it is like a Beis HaMikdash built on Har HaBayis.

Some people have the custom of singing Shalom Aleichem Friday night of Succos, and some don't. The Shem MiShmuel explains the custom of those who don't sing Shalom Aleichem. He explains that the kedushah of the succah is so great that malachim cannot go there.<sup>25</sup>

### Worthy of Gan Eden

After discussing the holiness of the succah, we understand that it is proper to make oneself worthy of being there.

Rashi tells us that animals came to Noach's *teivah* on their own, but only those animals that didn't sin were able to enter the *teivah*.

The Shem MiShmuel (5673) teaches that, 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* accepts a person, he will experience a good feeling while in the *succah*. But *chas veshalom*, if the *succah* doesn't accept him, he will not be happy there. If one enjoys sitting in the *succah*, that is a sign that the *succah* has accepted him. This can't be seen. It is in the feelings of the heart and revealed only to Hashem."

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

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

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*.

Nevertheless, let us encourage all those who don't yet enjoy being in succah that they are also accomplishing a great deal by being there.

The succah is for everyone.

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25. For those who do say Shalom Aleichem, there is a question whether one should begin with Shalom Aleichem, to greet the malachim or whether to begin with the ushpizin, to first invite the holy ushpizin into the succah?

Someone told the Satmer Rebbe zt'l that he thinks we should invite the malachim first, because of the rule *תדיר ושאינו תדיר תדיר קודם*, whatever is more common comes first. We say Shalom Aleichem every Friday night of the year. It is more common than the inviting the ushpizin, therefore Shalom Aleichem should be first.

The Satmer Rebbe disagreed. He said that although the words of the Shalom Aleichem are the same each week, each time is different because the malachim that come to his home are dependent on his deeds and preparation during the six days of the week. The Satmer Rebbe said, "In my opinion, the ushpizin should be invited first, because the ushpizin are tzaddikim, and tzaddikim are greater than malachim.

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

Chazal (Succah 22.) say, המעובה כמין בית כשרה, if the schach on the succah is very thick, and it appears like a house, it is also kosher. Tzaddikim said that this alludes to the Yidden who are מעובה כמין בית, very thick, coarse, and *gashmiyosdig*. The succah is for them too.<sup>26</sup>

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

His rebbe told him, "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*."

The Torah says (*Vayikra* 23:42), בסוכות תשבו, "Dwell in succos..." תשבו has the same letters as בושה, shame. The Yeitev 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 sacred abode? The answer is with thoughts of *teshuvah*. As the *pasuk* continues, כל האורה. The translation of האורה, "I will shine." It is in the future tense. It means: "Although I am not worthy to enter the *succah*, in the merit that I plan to improve my ways, I am able to enter the *succah*."

The *pasuk* concludes, כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים, "I had Bnei Yisrael live in succos when I took them out of the land of Mitzrayim." When they left Mitzrayim, they weren't worthy, but in the merit that they would 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*, even now.

## Emunah

It states (*Vayikra* 23:42-43), בסוכות תשבו שבעת ימים... למען ידעו... אני ה' אלקיכם, "Dwell in succos for seven days... so you will know... I am Hashem, your G-d." The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explains that the segulah of *succah* is to believe and to know Hashem. When we sit in the *succah*, it's an ideal time לדעת, to think and talk about *emunah*, and to strengthen our awareness of Hashem.

Before the Satmar Rebbe's zt'l *chasunah*, his father, the Kedushas Yom Tov, told him that the *succah* is outdoors, so people can look up at the sky through the schach and remember to trust in Hashem.<sup>27</sup> He added that this is also why a chuppah is customarily under the sky. This is so that the chassan and kallah can look to heaven and remember to trust in Hashem, for only He can provide for them, not their parents and no one else.

## Luxuries

It states, וה' ברך את אברהם בכל, "Hashem blessed Avraham with everything." There are several translations of the word בכל, everything. The Midrash states that בכל, "everything" is the mitzvah *succah*. Hashem blessed Avraham with the mitzvah of *succah*; when one has this mitzvah, he has everything.

<sup>26</sup>. This is also hinted by the lulav, which one shakes in all directions (see Succah 37:). We go up and down with the lulav, indicating that those who are low can rise high. We shake the lulav back and forth, מוליד ומביא, to indicate that those who are מוליד going away from the kedushah, מביא, can return, because on Succos, everyone can return to Hashem.

<sup>27</sup>. The Yerushalmi (*Succah* 2:3) teaches that *lechatichilah* one should be able to see the stars through the *s'chach*. Seeing the sky will remind him to trust in Hashem.

The Chozeh of Lublin (*Avnei Zikoron* 662) *zt'l* explains that the *succah* reminds us that luxuries aren't that important. We discover that we can live in a hut for seven days, and nothing is lacking. When we know that, we have הכל, everything. Even a person with few physical possessions can feel satisfied because he has everything he really needs.

Some people live in beautiful homes, but are they happier than those with simpler accommodations? Not necessarily.

Some people spend a lot of money on vacations, while others spend far less. Who has a better time? And some people don't take vacations at all. Are their lives less enjoyable because of that?

Every person has different needs, but one thing is certain: If you aren't happy with your portion, you can travel the entire world, live in a beautiful mansion, and still be miserable. And if you are happy with your lot, no matter what you have or do, you have everything. That is the brachah Hashem gave Avraham. He blessed him with הכל, everything, which is the lesson we learn from succah – to train ourselves to be happy with our portion.

It states (*Bereishis* 25:8), ויגוע וימת אברהם בשיבה, טובה וקן ושבע, "Avraham passed away at an old age, old and satisfied."

The Siforno translates ושבע: "He was satisfied with everything he desired to see and to do in his lifetime."

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains:

"This *pasuk* is teaching us Avraham's good *middos*. He left this world feeling fulfilled. He didn't need more... This is unlike most people about whom it states (*Koheles* 5:9), אורה כסף לא ישבע כסף, 'one who desires money will never have enough money.' And Chazal (*Koheles Rabba* 1:32) say, 'When a person leaves the world, he didn't attain half of what he wanted. If he has a hundred, he wants two hundred. If he has two hundred, he wants four hundred.'"<sup>28</sup> But Avraham was satisfied and happy because Hashem blessed him with הכל, the mitzvah of succah, which helps us attain happiness and contentment.

Rebbe Yonoson Eibshitz (6:1) teaches that those who don't have luxuries lead better lives. He writes, "A person who fears Hashem doesn't have *succos* only during the yom tov Succos. Throughout the entire year he will remember that life is temporary and he's a guest in this world. One shouldn't build expensive houses decorated with gems and diamonds just for pleasure. This will lead him to desire more money, to sin, and causes him to be proud and forget Hashem, who created him. Remember Yundav ben Rechev's precious, ethical ill (*Yirmiyahu* 35:6). He instructed his children not to live in houses. They should live in tents and temporary dwelling places, one day here and the next somewhere else. This is what our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov did. They dwelt in tents. This gave them long life"<sup>29</sup>

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**28.** This Midrash is difficult to understand because it states that a person doesn't even get to half his desires, and then it states that if he has a hundred, he desires two hundred. So it seems that 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.

**29.** The Yaaras Dvash also notes that the Mishkan, made from יריעות, skins and woven cloth, lasted for 480 years (counting the years the Mishkan stood in the desert and later in Eretz Yisrael, until its final 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. Similarly, he says, the *avos* had less luxuries, and therefore they lived long lives.

because they weren't afraid a fire might burn down their castles, and they weren't fearful of enemies, hunger, or plagues since they could quickly undo the ropes of their tents and travel to a different location.

"When Bilaam saw the Jewish nation dwelling in tents, he said, *מה טובו אהליך יעקב*, 'How good are your tents.' He was referring to their tents, specifically, because we are a people who dwell in tents... and then it will be good for us in this world and the next. But when we build houses from lime and stone, the stones will shout out all the sins: theft, pride, temptation, and desire. This is the lesson of the *pasuk* *בסוכות תשבו שבעת ימים* (*Vayikra* 23:42)." Dwell in the temporary *succos* for seven days and discover this mode of life.

The Kli Yakar (*Vayikra* 23:42) writes, "After people harvest their crops, they want to go home and live in a permanent dwelling. The Torah feared this might lead to arrogance. Therefore, the Torah says *כל האזרח*, whoever has plans to live in this world as a permanent resident, *ישבו בסוכות*, must first dwell in the 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 place his trust in the walls of his home. He will trust on Hashem alone."

The *Sfas Emes* (5645) writes, "The mitzvah of *succah* is the mitzvah of *bitachon*. As Chazal say, *צא מדירת קבע*, 'Leave your permanent house...'. 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." (see also Rashbam on *Vayikra* 23:43).

### **Hoshanah Rabbah**

Hoshanah Rabba means "a great salvation." As its name implies, many salvations come from this holy day.<sup>30</sup> After one's passing, the Heavenly court will ask him, *צפית לישועה*, "Did you wait for the salvation?" (*Shabbos* 31.). The *Imrei Emes* of Gur *zt'l* explains that he is asked *צפית לישועה*, did you look forward to Hoshana Rabba, the day Hashem bestows salvation?

If you knew someone was giving you a fortune of money seven days from now, wouldn't you look forward to that day? And if in seven days you or your child will get the shidduch you waited for, the refuah you need, or the job you hoped for, wouldn't you look forward to that day? That is how we should look forward to Hoshanah Rabba. On this day, Hashem gives salvations to His nation.

The *Divrei Yoel* of Satmar *zt'l* would daven on Hashanah Rabbah for a very long time. Once, Hashanah Rabbah fell on a Friday, and due to the long tefillos, it was almost *Shabbos*, and they weren't finished yet. So the *gaba'im* announced that the women should go home to light *Shabbos* candles.

At that time, the Satmar Rebbe told the following *mashal*:

A city sinned against the king, and all the residents were sentenced to death. The people inquired and found out that once a year, the king passes through a particular

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30. The *Divrei Chaim* of Tzanz *zt'l* said that Hoshanah Rabba has three translations, and they are all correct.

1) The Rabba, the Great One, Hashem, should save us.

2) Rabba is the Jewish nation because they are called *בני בכורי ישראל* (*Shemos* 4:22). Hoshanah Rabba means that the Rabba, the Jewish nation, will be saved.

3) Hashem should save us with a *ישועה גדולה*, a great salvation.

garden in their city. So the city's elders decided to go there on that day and plead and beg forgiveness from the king.

The elders went to the garden on the designated date but didn't see the king. So they waited, figuring that perhaps the king would arrive later in the day.

The day was almost over. They were ready to give up and return home. One wise man said, "The king's custom is to come here this day, so he is certainly here. It must be that he came concealed, dressed like a regular citizen. Let's shout out to the king and request that he saves us. He will hear us and forgive us."

The Satmar Rebbe cried, "Hoshanah Rabba, the King of the world comes to this world. We think the King isn't here, but He is present, and if we shout out to Him, He will answer our tefillos. Let's shout together, הושע נא והושיע נא אבינו אתה!"

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* said in the last year of his life, "I passed the judgment of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But I didn't pass the judgment of Hoshanah Rabbah." This is because Hoshanah Rabba is a day of

judgment, like Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

The Gemara calls Hoshanah Rabbah, "Yom Aravah" the day we take the *aravah*, and there is no mention that it is a day of judgment. Similarly, most early sefarim don't mention that Hoshanah Rabba is a day of judgment. It is, however, called a day of judgment in kabbalah sefarim (see Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah ch.16).

Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* explained that in the early generations, the fear of judgment was so great that if people knew that Hoshanah Rabbah is another day of judgment, it would take away from their *simchas yom tov*. Therefore, the judgment was concealed from them so they can perform the mitzvah of ושמחת בהגך, and it was only discussed in kabbalah sefarim, that the common folk didn't have access to. In later generations (and in our times), the fear isn't as intense, and therefore, more *sefarim* reveal to us that there's an awesome judgment on Hoshanah Rabbah, too. What will happen in the year is largely dependent on this day. This knowledge spurs us to daven, to do *teshuvah*, and to give *tzedakah* to annul all harsh decrees.<sup>31</sup>

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**31.** Reb Shlomo Zalman adds that there is one indication to the judgment of Hoshanah Rabbah in the Gemara and in the *sefarim* of the early poskim. Chazal say, בחג נידונים על המים, "On Succos we are judged for rain," 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 of the judgment for rain."

Reb Shlomo Zalman explained that in the past, rain meant life. If it didn't rain, people would die from thirst. Today things have changed, because counties have reservoirs of water, and if needed, water can be transported. [The Chazon Ish said that we don't fast for rain anymore, because the lack of rain isn't as tragic as it used to be.] Therefore, years ago, it was sufficient for people to know that they were being judged for rain, and this would arouse them to *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah*. Today, the judgment over water doesn't rouse people to *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah* anymore, therefore the sefarim tell us more details of the awesome judgment of this day.

The Halichos Shlomo (Succos, p.241) writes Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach's customs on this day. "From the beginning of the night, Reb Shlomo Zalman had immense fear, similar to the fear he had on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. He spent most hours of the night saying Tehillim with a lot of kavanah. Also in his elder years, he would get out of his bed several times on this night to say Tehillim. He was very displeased when people came to visit him on this night. To those who came, he spoke to them very briefly, and as soon as the conversation was over, he returned to his Tehillim."

Two yungerleit were speaking on Hoshanah Rabba night in the beis medresh of Reb Avraham Elimelech

Hoshanah Rabbah is the *yahrtzeit* of Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Tchartkov *zt'l*. He would say that Hoshanah Rabbah is named after 'Amen yehei shmei **rabbah**.' This is because when people are cautious with *Amen yehei shmei rabba* they will have their salvation. 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 will be forgiven" (*Shabbos* 119).

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*. When the Nazi general, Rommel *ym's*, was in Mitzrayim intending to continue on 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 the way they recite *Amen yehei shmei rabba*." And indeed, the Yidden in Eretz Yisrael were miraculously spared.

### **Shemini Atzeres**

The Midrash says that after seven days of Succos, Hakadosh Baruch requests us to wait one more day. קשה עלי פרידתכם, "because your departure is hard for Me." The Imrei Emes adds that the Jewish nation should also feel that they don't want to leave the *yomim tovim*. The feeling should be mutual.

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 focal point, he says, is Shemini Atzeres. Therefore, Shemini Atzeres isn't a חג. It is the point that everything goes around.

The Sfas Emes says the *schach* of the *succah* resembles a wedding chuppah. Then, after the chuppah comes *yichud*, an even greater unity. That happens on Shemini Atzeres.

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

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

The Chasam Sofer *zy'a* teaches that Shemini Atzeres is greater than Yom Kippur because Yom Kippur is to love Hashem through affliction (the fasting, not washing, etc.), and on Shemini Atzeres we love Hashem with joy, which is a much deeper connection. For it states (*Shir HaShirim* 7:7) מזה יפת ומה נעמת, אהבה בתענוגים, "How beautiful it is when the love is with pleasure and joy."

The Chinuch (324) writes that we don't take the four *minim* on Shemini Atzeres because the four *minim* are to remind us to direct our joy (of gathering the crops) to Hashem. Shemini Atzeres we don't need this reminder because, יום השמיני כולו לה', "The eighth day is solely for Hashem." The day was designated to be with Hashem, so we don't need reminders to focus our hearts on Hashem.

Shemini Atzeres is a day when we receive many brachos from Hashem.

The *Zohar* states, "On Hoshanah Rabba, the judgment is completed, and the blessings begin. On the following day (Shemini Atzeres), the Jewish nation celebrates with the King

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of Karlin *zt'l*. The rebbe told them, "I am certain that you have something very important to discuss, because otherwise you wouldn't discuss it tonight. However, it would be better if you would have discussed these matters during Kol Nidrei rather than to speak on this holy night." Meaning that tefillah on Hoshanah Rabba is more important than on Yom Kippur.

and receives blessings for the entire year. At that celebration, only the Jewish nation is present, and when one sits alone with the king, whatever he asks will be granted."

Reb Chaim Palagi *zt'l* teaches, "Be extremely 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*."

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

The Kotzker *zt'l* said that Shemini Atzeres is the *gzar din* (the decree) for *parnassah*. His son, Rebbe Dovid *zt'l*, used to daven *beyichidus* (himself). On Shemini Atzeres, the Kotzker called for him and told him that on Shemini Atzeres it is crucial to daven with a minyan, because on this day it is decreed how much *parnassah* he will have this year. This is hinted in the pasuk *והיית אך שמח*, which the Gemara says refers to Shemini Atzeres, and the final letters spell *הת"ך*, the name of the malach appointed over *parnassah*.

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

### Bringing Succos Home

Shemini Atzeres, in the afternoon, we *gezegen* (formally take leave) with the succah. There's a *tefillah* that some say at this time (*רבונאדעלמא*...), printed in many *sidurim* and *machzorim*. In this prayer, we say, "It shall be Your will that the malachim associated with the succah and the four minim...should come with us into our homes..." This is because we don't want to leave the mitzvos behind. We want to take along the blessings and the spirituality

we received from these mitzvos for the entire year.

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

The Shiniver Rav *zt'l* asks:

Wouldn't it be better if the *piyut* would say, "Listen to the *tefillos* of those who *dwelled* in a succah"? Why do we pray that Hashem should listen to the *tefillos* of those who *leave* the succah?

The Shiniver Rav *zt'l* answers that we ask Hashem to listen to the prayers of those who absorbed the holy atmosphere of succah, with all its lessons, and take them along as they return home.

Chazal take note that *בסוכות תשבו* expresses a contradiction. Because *סוכות* is a *temporary* dwelling and *תשבו* is a home where one lives *permanently*. Therefore, Chazal say that the pasuk is telling us that we should live in the succah in a permanent manner. In Chazal's words, *תשבו כעין תדורו*, live in the succah as you live at home.

There is a concept of *אין הקש למחצה*, that when two ideas are juxtaposed in the Torah, the *drashah* goes both ways. The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* explains that *בסוכות תשבו*, therefore, teaches us two lessons. It tells us to live in the succah in a permanent manner, as we live in the home, and it also teaches us to live at home the same way we lived in the succah. People have uplifted thoughts in the succah, and we should bring this inspiration back with us.

In (*Gittin* 56) a *בריה קלה* is an insect that eats but does not produce waste.

So, *קלה* means to take in and not to give out. The Gemara (*Avodah Zorah* 3) calls *succah*, *מצוה קלה*, a light and easy mitzvah. Reb Avraham Yehoshua Friend of Nasod *zy'a hy'd* explained that *succah* is called *מצוה קלה* because one should take in the light and the holiness of the *succah*, and it should never depart from him.

### Simchas Torah

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

The Shalmei Chagigah (p.292: printed year תק"ג) writes, "On Simchas Torah, fortunate is the person who rejoices with the Torah, for this will rectify his soul for the times that he disgraced the Torah. Additionally, there's a guarantee from early scholars that whoever is happy with the Torah on this day will have offspring who will always study Torah. There was a rav who used to be very happy on Simchas Torah, and his descendants were renowned scholars for three generations, one after the next. Everyone knew that it was because he was so happy with the Torah on Simchas Torah in a way that wasn't seen by other rabbanim and gedolei Yisrael. Despite his prestigious rabbinic position, he would jump and dance before the Torah and encourage others to do the same."

The Shaar HaKavanos states, "My teacher (the Arizal) went around the bimah... and danced and sang with all his strength. Then, on motzei yom tov, he went to several batei midrashim to dance with the Torah (called in Eretz Yisrael הקפה שניות), and this lasted many hours."

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

People were amazed by how much effort and strength the Satmer Rebbe zt'l put into his dancing on Simchas Torah, although he was generally a weak man. When they asked him about this, he replied, "Chazal (Succah 48.) say, שמיני עזרה רגל בפני עצמה היא, " On Shemini Atzeres everyone gets another רגל (foot) to help him dance.

Dancing with the Torah on Simchas Torah is also mesugal for children. The Yismach Yisrael zt'l derives this from Michal, who was disgusted with her husband, Dovid

Hamelech, when she saw him dance with all his might before the aron hakodesh (see Shmuel 2, 16:23). She was punished that she couldn't bear a child. So, we understand that if one is happy with the Torah, he will be rewarded with children.

A member of our *chaburah* didn't have children, and on one simchas Torah he danced with all his might with the Torah. Nine months later, he had his first child. The following Simchas Torah he did the same, and he had another child nine months later. A childless friend of his heard about this, and he wanted to do the same. So, he went to an old-age home where no one knew him, where he wouldn't be embarrassed to dance with all his might, and he danced and honored the Torah immensely. Nine months later, his first child was born.

The Chida wrote a prayer that some say before the hakafos. This prayer states that by dancing on Simchas Torah, we bring down all the iron walls that separate us from Hashem.

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

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

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

The Rebbe Rayatz of Lubavitz zt'l said in the name of his father, the Rebbe Reshab zt'l, "We must know that every moment of the 48 hours of Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah are precious, for on those days we can draw buckets of spiritual and material bounty. We get these by dancing."

Simchas Torah, we read וזאת הברכה, the brachos Moshe gave Bnei Yisrael, and as we read them, we receive those brachos again. Rebbe Henoch of Alexander zt'l said that this is why there isn't birchas cohanim Simchas Torah. We are receiving Moshe Rabbeinu's brachos and don't need any other brachos.

### Take Yom Tov with You

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

A chassid of the Beis Aharon of Karlin zt'l returned home after spending a *yom tov* with his Rebbe. People asked him, ווי אזוי איז 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. It entered." The *yom tov* became part of him. He will now bring the spirituality that he acquired into his daily life.

Once, after *yom tov*, Rebbe Dovid of Tolne zy'a asked one of his chassidim how he will return home. The chassid replied, "The goy that drove me here will take 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. Instead, the *yom tov* should change us, and we should become new.

The Dubno Magid related the following *mashal* to explain why people cry by *Neilah* (and, as we will see, it is related to our topic):

A king had an only daughter, whom he loved dearly. When it was time to marry her off, a matchmaker told the king, "I have a good *shidduch* for your daughter. He lives far from here, but he is the son of a great king. He has a lot of money and has all the desired qualities."

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

In that foreign land, she discovered that the shadchan had lied to them. Her husband wasn't the son of a king, and he wasn't wealthy either. It was a farce.

Even worse, her husband was cruel to her. He didn't act like a royal prince, trained with good *middos*. He acted like the lowest, crudest people.

One day, the king sent them a letter, "I miss you so much, and since you are not coming to visit me, I decided I will make the long trip to visit you." The king wrote them the date he expected to arrive.

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

When the king arrived, he was delighted with what he saw. He was happy he chose the perfect husband for his daughter.

The king was about to return to his palace, and the princess realized that this was her last opportunity to tell her father what was really happening. So, in privacy and amidst tears, she told her father that her husband isn't the son of a king and he treats her with cruelty.

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

But then we daven *Ne'ilah*, and the King is about to leave, the Yid cries to Hashem and says, "I suffer so much from my body. When You visit, the body acts nicely with me because it doesn't want You to know what is really happening. But now that You're about to leave, I must tell You that 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*, but some add the following:

The king thought of a solution:

"I will live here together with you. In my presence, your husband will always treat you well."

The *nimshal* is, by *Ne'ilah*, when we cry that we don't want to be with the body, Hashem replies, "Build a *succah*, and I will live together with you. In my presence, the body won't disturb you. And even after yom tov, you can take the atmosphere of the yom tov with you, and I will remain with you. In My presence, the body will not keep you from serving Hashem."