



CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR
Shabbos Table

... FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ...

DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

FIRST DAYS: HOW TO GET THE BEST ESROG

The cost of purchasing a quality set of the *arba'ah minim* is beyond the means of many families. To help these families, the Vaad Harabbanim L'inyanei Tzedaka, a charitable organization in Yerushalayim, sponsors a subsidized *arba'ah minim* marketplace each year where thousands of sets of the four *minim* are sold at reduced prices. It is a tremendous service to many.

Like all *arba'ah minim shuks*, the Vaad Harabbanim *shuk* hires a number of *rabbanim* who are experts in the halachos of the four species to answer halachic questions on the *minim* at the *shuk*. The *rabbanim* sit there from morning till night, checking hundreds of *lulavim*, *esrogim*, and *hadassim*.

Because of the tremendous crush of people at the *shuk*, the *rabbanim* decided one year that they could only answer specific *she'eilos* about the *minim*. Questions like "What do you think about this *lulav*?" or "Which of these three *esrogim* should I choose?" would not be accepted. They posted signs explaining this policy all around the room in which they answered questions.

All went well for a while, until one middle-aged Jew approached. He was wearing a traditional Russian peaked cap and was clutching three *lulavim*. "What does the Rabbi think about these three *lulavim*?" he asked in broken Hebrew with a thick Slavic accent.



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PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles will appear in next week's issue.

- 1 Which six things are called "rishon" or "reishis"?
- 2 Which two special features does the *esrog* have in the story of *Bereishis*?
- 3 Rabi Elazar holds there is a mitzvah to eat all meals of Sukkos in the sukkah and notes that that adds up to 14 meals (seven days of Sukkos in Eretz Yisrael). Why not 15? Doesn't Shabbos have three meals?
- 4 According to Rabi Akiva, the *sukkos* that Klal Yisrael used in the *midbar* were real *sukkos*, not the חנוכה. What is so miraculous about that? Why would we make a whole Yom Tov to commemorate that?
- 5 In some *sefarim* we find the words יתק"ק סימן at the end of *Koheles*. What is that referring to? (Not the number of *pesukim*—there are only 222)
- 6 Who is *Koheles*? Why was he called *Koheles*? Can you prove his identity from the *pesukim* in *Megillas Koheles*?
- 7 Which Yom Tov do *Chazal* refer to simply as "chag"? Which one is "Atzeres"? How do they refer to Shemini Atzeres?



SERIAL >> PART 1

CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

T

his is the year!” Rav Dovid Weissenstein told his wife on Rosh Chodesh Elul 5769.

“Really? Are you sure?” she asked. “But it’s so much work...and will anyone even agree?”

“It’s time,” R’ Dovid said. “No more shlepping to borrowed sukkos all over Rechovot. This year, we get to work on building our own sukkah!”

Building their own sukkah was not as easy as it sounded. In Rechovot, one did not just nip in to Home Depot or the Sukkah Depot for a few pieces of lumber or a pre-fab, Ease-Snap, or Lok-Together Sukkah. The Weissensteins lived on an upper floor of a multistory apartment building. There was no porch, no parking spot, no place for them to build a sukkah at all!

The only way the Weissensteins could get their own sukkah would be by adding a porch to their apartment so they would have a place to build one. But it was not so easy to build a porch. It was very expensive. Still, that was not the biggest problem. To add a porch, one needed a building permit, which meant R’ Dovid would have to get every single family in the building to sign a paper agreeing to the addition.

That was the problem. Some people would agree because they also wanted to add a porch or because they were Torah observant and understood the importance of having a personal sukkah. But many would object that the porch would protrude from the facade of the building, ruining the look. Others would say it would block their view or the sunlight, and some would refuse just because.

The building had many entrances, and each entrance led to 18 apartments. Many residents were not observant. What were the odds of getting so many people to agree?

Well, you never know until you try. R’ Dovid thought as he stood outside the door of the first neighbor on his list, holding the necessary documents. It was now or never. He knocked on the door.

Surprisingly, the first neighbor didn’t seem to mind too much. The second was a bit more stubborn, and the third put up a fight. One by one, the negotiations continued, and the list of signatures grew. After several weeks, he had a significant number of names.

But R’ Dovid was avoiding Mr. V.

Mr. V. lived directly below the Weissensteins. He was an old, nonobservant Eastern European immigrant, and he didn’t say much. Other than a quick *shalom* here and there, R’ Dovid had never exchanged a word with him. The planned porch was going to block his view and sunlight more than anyone else’s. There was no reason to dream he would agree to such a proposal.

But there was no point in avoiding it any longer. R’ Dovid took a deep breath, headed up the steps, and stood in front of Mr. V.’s door.

TO BE CONTINUED...

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DVAR TORAH >>

LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

Three different angles on a dvar Torah, one each from Litvish, Chassidic, and Sephardic sources. Can be split between the three seudos.

לְמַעַן יִדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בְּסֻכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

“In order that your generations should know that I settled the Children of Israel in sukkos when I took them out of the Land of Egypt” (*Vayikra* 23:43).

עֲנַנֵי כְבוֹד הַיּוֹן, דְּבַר ר' אֱלִיעֶזֶר

“According to Rabi Eliezer, these were the Clouds of Glory” (*Sukkah* 11).

There were three special gifts that Klal Yisrael had in the midbar: the mann, the Well of Miriam, and the Clouds of Glory. Why is there a mitzvah d’Oraysa to commemorate the clouds but not the other two?

RABI CHAIM KFUSI, CHIEF RABBI OF EGYPT:

The well and the *mann* were necessary for the people to survive in the desert. But the *ananei hakavod* were an extra gift, a luxury, meant only to show Hashem’s love for us. That special love deserves a celebration!

CHIDA:

The *mann* and well were given to Klal Yisrael after they complained. That is not a cause for celebration. But the clouds were given without any negativity attached.

BNEI YISSASCHAR, RAV OVADIA YOSEF:

The *mann* and well were also available for the benefit of the *Eirev Rav*, foreigners who joined Klal Yisrael when they left Egypt. But the clouds were only welcoming to Klal Yisrael as they were a special sign between us and Hashem.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >>



CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!



R'

Dovid lifted his hand and knocked twice.

There was a sound of shuffling within. Footsteps approached the door, which soon creaked open. Mr. V. stood in the doorway.

“Ah, *shalom*,” he said in heavily accented Hebrew. “Please come in.”

R' Dovid sat on the couch and launched into his pitch. He talked about the sukkah, the porch, the view... Eventually, he trailed off and waited for a response.

“This is for a mitzvah?” Mr. V. asked.

“Yes, Sukkos, it’s the *chag* in which—”

Mr. V. had already grabbed a pen, signed, and was pushing the paper across the coffee table back to R' Dovid.

“Oh, thank you!” R' Dovid jumped up, full of gratitude and ready to leave.

But Mr. V. was not ready to let him go.

“You know, Duvid'l, I don’t know anything,” he began.

“Well, I, er...”

“I grew up in Bulgaria and never met a religious Jews there.” Mr. V. talked and talked. He described his travels, wanderings, and troubles. Throughout the monologue he kept repeating one point: that he had never had a chance to learn any Torah, about Hashem, or about any mitzvos.

“And now, I am an old man, and my life is behind me. It is too late for me,” Mr. V. finished with a sigh.

R' Dovid jumped up, electrified.

“Mr. V! It’s not too late!” he cried.

“Too late. It’s too late,” Mr. V. insisted.

“It’s never too late. Come. Let’s do your first mitzvah right now!”

“Mitzvah? What mitzvah? I don’t know any mitzvot. I don’t even know where to start.”

“Let’s start with...” R' Dovid wracked his brain. Where should he start? R' Dovid had never been involved in any *kiruv* before. What was an appropriate first mitzvah for a beginner?

“...*Kriat Shema*!” he said. “Your very first mitzvah will be to say Shema!” He looked expectantly at Mr. V.

Mr. V. stared back blankly. “Crutch a who?”

R' Dovid struggled to hide his shock. The man had been living in Eretz Yisrael for nearly 40 years and had never heard of *Kriat Shema*.

“I’ll be back in a moment!” R' Dovid sprinted for the stairs and rushed home to get a siddur so that Mr. V. could say his first Shema.

TO BE CONTINUED...



B

reathless, R' Dovid Weissenstein dashed back into Mr. V.’s apartment, a siddur clenched in his hand. Quickly, he flipped to the appropriate page and presented it to the old man.

Mr. V.’s face still held a blank look. He could read Hebrew, but he obviously did not recognize the words at all.

R' Dovid began to explain. “OK, so you cover eyes with your right hand, like *so*. Have in mind that... that I love Hashem and He loves me, and now say these words...”

Belatedly, R' Dovid realized how silly that sounded. Mr. V. didn’t know the words, so he couldn’t say them with his eyes covered! He switched tactics.

“I’m going to step outside and leave you alone with this siddur. You say it at your own pace.”

“Can you say it with me, word for word?”

“This is a special moment between you and your Creator. No one else should be present.” With that, R' Dovid turned to leave.

“I’ll return the siddur when I am done,” Mr. V. called.

“No, that’s alright, you can keep it. It’s a gift from me to you. Use it whenever you wish.”

The ensuing days were hectic ones for R' Dovid. He spent hours talking to neighbors and negotiating more signatures for his application for a permit to build a porch. Yom Tov was coming, and there was much to do. He didn’t see Mr. V. on the steps or in the hallways, and he didn’t visit. He didn’t want to pressure the man about his newfound mitzvah too much.

Two weeks went by.

It was 5:55 a.m. when there was a knock at the door of the Weissenstein residence.

TO BE CONTINUED...



SERIAL >> PART 4

CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

R

av Dovid Weissenstein bolted out of bed in a sudden, confused, sleepy haze. Who could be knocking at the door before 6 a.m.? He approached the door and looked through the peephole.

Standing in the hallway was Mrs. V., the wife of his upstairs neighbor Mr. V. Hastily, R' Dovid wrenched open the door.

"What's going on? Is everything OK? Is there a problem? Can I help you with something?"

Mrs. V. shook her head slowly. "No. The time for help has passed." Echoing her husband's words from two weeks earlier, she added, "It's too late."

"What? You mean... No!"

Mrs. V. nodded. "My husband passed away late last night. He had been hospitalized, in a coma, for two weeks. On the night of your visit, he slipped into an unconscious state while sleeping. He was taken to the hospital, where he spent his last two weeks. He never woke up."

R' Dovid sagged against the doorpost. He felt like he was about to collapse. His meeting with the old man was one of the last things the man ever did.

"Tell me, *giveret*... Did you happen to notice if he said Shema that night?"

"Say Shema? Are you kidding? He cried Shema. He *bawled* Shema. He pored over it for hours, crying his heart and soul out for all his lost years. I've never seen him so alive, so emotional. And now he's..." Mrs. V.'s own eyes filled.

R' Dovid couldn't believe it. Like Rav Elazar ben Durdaya, Hashem had sent Mr. V. one golden moment in which to be *koneh olamo*, to acquire Olam Haba, just before he passed. What a *zechus*!

"What can I do for you, Mrs. V.?"

"I don't know what you discussed with my husband on that day," the new widow said, "but it seemed to have something to do with religion. We never had a rabbi, so you are the only religious connection my husband ever had. You are his unofficial rabbi. Would you agree to officiate at the funeral?"

Only a handful of people attended the funeral of the lonely old man. As officiating rabbi, R' Dovid was asked to say a few words. He related the events of the final day of Mr. V.'s consciousness, telling the people how their friend and neighbor had departed from the world. "His true desire to do the mitzvah surrounded him. The thousands of angels created by his heartfelt mitzvah, by those holy words, are dancing with him forever."

THE END



VILNA GAON:

The Yom Tov is not to commemorate the first giving of the clouds, but the second. They were taken away from *Klal Yisrael* when they committed the sin of the *eigel*. Their *teshuvah* was accepted on Yom Kippur, and the *ananei hakavod* returned shortly thereafter, on 15 Tishrei, after four days of collecting and counting the donations for the Mishkan. The return of the clouds teach us the power of *teshuvah*, which is a vital lesson for this time of year.

BEIS HALEVI:

The mitzvah is not to *commemorate* the sukkos (clouds); the clouds were a *precursor* for our future mitzvah of Sukkos! The reason we had clouds is because Hashem was going to give us a mitzvah of Sukkos, which has its own purpose. The *mann* and water, though, were just for food and drink.

RAV MOSHE SHTERNBUCH:

The clouds were given to us in order to maintain the impact and *kedushah* of Har Sinai. The sukka is given to us to maintain the *kedushah* and impact of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

RAV YISRAEL OF RUZHIN:

The clouds were formed from the breath of *Klal Yisrael*. When people live together in peace, their breath can join and build. But when they argue, it dissipates. *Klal Yisrael* built the clouds themselves through their peaceful relationships with each other. There is no greater miracle and celebration than that!

BNEI YISSASCHAR:

We celebrate all three on Sukkos. The *mann* tasted like any food in the world, and the water of the *be'er* tasted like any drink in the world. On Sukkos, we have a special mitzvah to be happy, which includes enjoying lots of good food and drinks! (אין שמחה אלא בשר ויין)



PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF SUKKOS

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

Sukkos is the pinnacle of two separate sets of Yamim Tovim, the meeting and apex of two distinct tracks of *avodah*. It is the third of the *Shalosh Regalim* and the culmination of the Yamim Nora'im.

Shalosh Regalim

The *Shalosh Regalim* build our relationship with Hashem for all time. On Pesach, Hashem saves us and takes us to Him without our having earned it; on Shavuos, we are given the terms by which to earn it; and on Sukkos, we are taken back although we may have failed.

Yamim Nora'im

Rosh Hashanah builds a fresh acceptance of Hashem and his kingship. Yom Kippur gives us forgiveness and wipes our slates clean, giving us a fresh start. And Sukkos is the joy of the newly minted, clean closeness with Hashem.

Sukkos, then, is the celebration of the renewed close relationship with Hashem, on both levels. We are ready to give up on all the things that have gotten between us. We leave the illusion of protection, of solid roofs and homes and all other material things, and shelter in the embrace of Hashem and His mitzvah.

Joy

Sukkos carries a special mitzvah of joy. Free of all interferences and fake pursuits, we can feel the pure joy of connection to Hashem.

Shemini Atzeres

Shemini Atzeres is an even higher level. Sukkos carries an aspect of connection for the nations of the world as well, which is why there are 70 *korbanos* brought on Sukkos, one for each nation. On Shemini Atzeres, Hashem sets aside a special day for us. "Stay with Me one more day," He pleads. And Simchas Torah is another one *more* day. What better time is there to rejoice with the Torah, given just for us, and to renew our commitment and love for it and begin it again with refreshed commitment?

AVODAH OF THE WEEK:

- Spend as much time in the sukkah as possible.
- Each time you enter the sukkah, have in mind to fulfill the mitzvah of sukkah, זכר ליציאת מצרים, למען ידעו, and זכר ליציאת מצרים.
- At least once during each visit to the sukkah, look around and concentrate on the lack of walls between you and Hashem, and enjoy it!

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S RIDDLES:

1. What are the seven *mashkin* (liquids)? **Wine, honey, oil, milk, dew, blood, water** (חלב, טל, דם, מים - י"ד שח"ט ד"ם) How many are mentioned in *Parshas Ha'azinu*? **All of them.** Which word or phrase is the name of one, but refers to another? **דם עינב, "the blood of grapes" refers to wine.**
2. Which part of Yom Kippur *davening* requires a *minyan* aside from *Barchu*, *Kaddish*, and *Kedushah*? **The Thirteen Middos and all other parts of davening that are in Aramaic.**
3. Can you find the nine times we say **שמע ישראל** on Yom Kippur? **We say שמע once during Ma'ariv, four times in Shacharis (Korbanos, before Shemoneh Esrei, when taking out the Torah, and during Kedushah), three more times during each remaining Kedushah (Mussaf, Minchah, Ne'ilah), and when saying kabbalas ol malchus Shamayim at the end of Ne'ilah.**
4. What do we say 10 times on Yom Kippur? Why that number? **We say אשמונו and וידוי 10 times (including Minchah on Erev Yom Kippur). The Kohen Gadol washed his hands and feet 10 times and said the שמע המפורש 10 times.**

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

KOHELES HAFTORAH

Megillas Koheles is read on the Shabbos that falls on Sukkos. It is written by Shlomo Hamelech, the wisest of men, yet, on the surface, it reads like a depressive rant. *Koheles* speaks of the futility of all material things, emphasizing again and again that all things are a waste of time, will ultimately disappoint, are not new, and will not last. Many wonder why we would read something so depressing on a day that is meant to be filled with joy.

Shlomo had legendary opulence—feasts, riches, a harem, and a collection of horses unrivaled in history. Despite all his wealth, he remained unswayed by physical things. He, more than anyone else, was in a position to compare physical and spiritual pleasure. His message is *not* melancholy and is not meant to temper our joy. It teaches the true path to happiness in the same way that the sukkah does.

As *Chazal* teach us, the idea that we will be happy when we get *something* is a great hoax. We may be excited for a bit, but then emptiness sets in, and the search for the next item begins. Allowing our happiness to be dependent on stuff makes it progressively harder and harder to achieve that happiness. True happiness is reached when we learn to *release* the feeling of need and to rejoice instead in our accomplishments, specifically working toward a goal and achieving it.

What should that goal be? The Ramban points out that *Koheles* has another repeated theme: the only things that lasts, and are worth pursuing, are in the spiritual realm. These accomplishments are real because they are connected to the only thing that is eternal: Hashem Himself.

Leave behind the attractions of this world, says Shlomo. Come live in the sukkah, with the thatched roof! And celebrate only your connection to Hashem.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The *rabbanim* were about to point to the sign indicating that they could not address such questions, but the man continued. “Look, I don’t know much,” he said. “I recently got out from behind the Iron Curtain. In the USSR, I was hardly able to keep any mitzvos, and certainly not to learn a word of Torah. I never saw a *lulav*. When I came to Eretz Yisrael, I tried to learn as much as I could about G-d, and I am trying to keep mitzvos. But I don’t know anything about *arba’ah minim*, and I can’t choose. I need three, for myself and my two sons. Are these OK?”

Upon hearing the man’s speech, the *rav* he had approached decided to make an exception. He proceeded to examine the three *lulavim*.

He was stunned. In a sponsored market, the quality of the items is good, but obviously, the really top stuff, which goes for hundreds of dollars, is not available. But these *lulavim* were all beautiful, perfect, *mehadrin aleph aleph!* They were fully closed, green till the top, perfectly straight, not sunburned, the proper size... From among all the thousands he had seen that season, these three were clearly the best!

He jumped up to show the *lulavim* to the other *rabbanim*. They all exclaimed in wonder. Such *lulavim* could cost hundreds of dollars. What were they doing in the discount *shuk*, and how had this man stumbled upon not one, but *three* such *lulavim* without knowing what he was looking at? It was statistically impossible!

“These are perfect *lulavim*,” they told the man.

“Great! I am going to choose three *esrogim*, and I will be back shortly so you could check those as well.”

Two minutes later, the man was back with three of the yellow-green bumpy fruits. The *rabbanim* began to examine the *esrogim* carefully and once again exclaimed in surprise.

“Not possible!”

“Can’t be!”

“A gem! Absolute diamond!”

The man’s *esrogim* were all perfect! Not a dot or nick marred their perfect skins, and the shape of each was straight, pure, tapered to the top, and beautiful. They were all picture-perfect! And he had chosen them in two minutes!

The *rabbanim* needed to get to the bottom of this. They closed the *bais hora’ah* and ushered the man into a private side room.

“Tell us,” one of the *rabbanim* said. “How exactly did you choose these *lulavim* and *esrogim*?”

“Well, like I told you, I don’t know anything about them. I’m trying to learn as much about mitzvos as I can, but I haven’t gotten up to the laws of Sukkos yet. I can’t tell an *esrog* from a cantaloupe. When I came to the *arba’ah minim shuk*, I told Hashem that. I said, ‘Hashem, You know I am doing the best I can, and I want to keep the mitzvos as properly as I can. You know that a *lulav* looks like a fishing rod to me. So You pick! I’m going to take the first *lulavim* I find. Please choose nice ones for me!’

“I picked up the first *lulavim* I saw and showed them to you. When I heard they were good, I figured Hashem accepted my prayer, so I went to grab the first three *esrogim* I saw.”

When we do everything we can, Hashem does the rest!

SECOND DAYS: HOSHANA RABBAH: ANOTHER YOM HADIN?

Hoshana Rabbah, coming 10 days after Yom Kippur, is known as the final day of judgement. Why is there another day of judgement? And why is Sukkos sandwiched between the days of judgement?

Rav Shalom Meir Wallach relates:

A

vi was excited. Finally, school was almost over! Summer was quickly approaching. Soon he would be graduating eighth grade and leaving his old elementary school for good!

His class had been busy discussing *mesivtas* for months. They had been hearing about the importance of getting into a top yeshivah since the middle of sixth grade, and had prepared for their *farhers* for months. It seemed like their lives rode on getting into the right *mesivta*.

But which one to choose? The boys were already experts in the various *yeshivos*. They knew the advantages and disadvantages of each. This one was very large, so you had the power of a large group learning in a *beis midrash* together; the other was small, so the *talmidim* didn't get lost. One placed a strong emphasis on *iyun*, the other on *bekius*. One was into *mussar*, one had a little *Chassidish varmkeit*. One had strict rules, and one let you goof around a little. One *rosh yeshivah* could get anybody into Brisk, and the other would probably try to keep you from going to Eretz Yisrael altogether...

Avi had made his selection—a small yeshivah with a reputation for great *ruach* and camaraderie. The *chevrah* were known for being very close to each other, and the yeshivah even had its own summer camp.

Avi had scheduled an interview with the *rosh yeshivah* and worked hard to prepare a piece of Gemara. The *rosh yeshivah* had seemed duly impressed. He'd asked a few questions and then said, "I won't be able to inform you

whether you are accepted until several

weeks before Elul *zman*, Avi.

There is a large number of applicants, and I have a lot to consider. But we were very impressed with you, and I would like to invite

you to join our summer camp in the meantime."

Avi was thrilled. The summer camp was known to be amazing. That was really what he had been looking forward to!

Finally, the first day of camp arrived. Avi was quickly accepted by the older *bachurim* in the yeshivah and was soon one of the *chevrah*, running free in the fresh air and having a blast. Campfires, cookouts, rafting, basketball...it was great!

One morning after Shacharis, following a packed day and exciting night activity, an announcement was made that there would be an optional Gemara *shiur* in the *beis midrash*.

"Are you going?" a boy sitting near Avi asked.

"Is it really optional?"

"Yes, no one has to go."

"I think I'll catch up on my sleep, then," Avi said with a yawn. "It was a late night last night, and I heard there's a party tonight as well..."

"Avi, can I give you some friendly advice?"

"Sure!"

"Why do you think the Rosh Yeshivah accepted you to the camp before he accepted you to the yeshivah?"

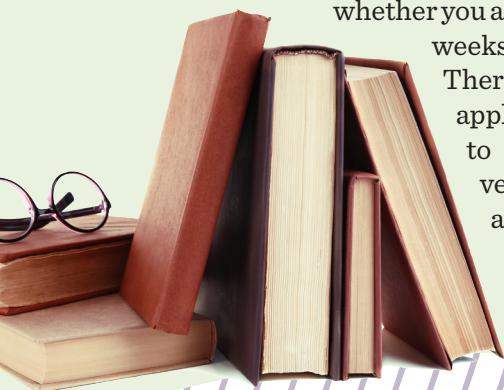
"I don't know. I was wondering the same thing."

"Here's my guess: He was impressed by your academic skills, but he's not sure about your *hasmadah* and *middos*. He brought you here to see how you perform in a loose, relaxed environment, and based on that, he will make his decision. Yesterday, in the gym, he was watching you very closely when you got into that argument about the foul call...and during rafting, when you were splashing people, he was watching..."

"I think it is very much in your best interest to go to the *shiur*."

This is Hoshana Rabbah, explains Rav Wallach. After serious teshuvah and kabbalos on Yom Kippur, Hashem wants to see what we will do during a time of joy. Will we translate the kabbalos into reality, or will they fall by the wayside?

The final judgement will follow.



אַחֲלֶקֶה שְׂכֵם וְעִמָּק סִכּוֹת אֲמֹדֵד

“I will divide סִכּוֹת, and the depth of sukkos I will measure” (*Tehillim* 60:8).

This *pasuk* hints at all the measurements of a sukkah! A sukkah must be at least 7x7 *tefachim* and have a height of between 10 *tefachim* and 20 *amos*. It requires two walls and a one-*tefach*-wide bit of a third wall.

The *pasuk* hints at these numbers as follows: אַחֲלֶקֶה שְׂכֵם—if I divide the letters of the word סִכּוֹת in half, אֲמֹדֵד—I get the measurements of a sukkah.

- Minimum surface area of the walls: 150 square *tefachim* (two walls 7x10 *tefachim* each, one 1x10). Divide the ו of the word סִכּוֹת in half and you get 150!
- Minimum height: 10 *tefachim*. Divide the כ in half = 10!
- Maximum height: 20 *amos*. Divide the ה in half = 20!
- Minimum area of the floor and *schach*: 7x7, which is 49. Gematria of 49 = אֲמֹדֵד!

(Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld)

THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



On the first day of Sukkos *Klal Yisrael* began building the Mishkan, and the עֲנַנֵי הַכְּבוֹד, which had left after the sin of the *eigel*, returned.



The first day of Sukkos is both the *yahrtzeit* and birthday of Yaakov Avinu.



The second day of Sukkos is the *yahrtzeit* of the Darkei Teshuvah and the Nezer Hakodesh.



The third day of Sukkos is the *yahrtzeit* of Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky, wife of *ybl*”c Rav Chaim *shlita*.



The fourth day of Sukkos is the *yahrtzeit* of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov.



The fifth day of Sukkos is the *yahrtzeit* of the Vilna Gaon.



The sixth day of Sukkos is the *yahrtzeit* of the Peleh Yo’etz.

HALACHAH



Minhagim of Sukkos



EREV SUKKOS

1. There is a special *segulah* brought in Kabbalistic sources to give extra *tzedakah* on Erev Sukkos. Rav Chaim Vital set up a food-distribution center on this day.
2. It is important to say on Erev Sukkos that one is not mentally setting aside the sukkah decorations from use. This way, they will not be *muktzah* and can be restored or taken down if it rains or they fall on Chol Hamoed.
3. One should not begin a *seudah* from the 10th hour on any Erev Yom Tov; some say that on Sukkos that is true from *chatzos*, so that one will have an appetite for the meal in the sukkah. The Terumas Hadeshen didn't sleep on Erev Sukkos either, so that he would have an "appetite" for sleeping in the sukkah!
4. One must tie the three branches of the four *minim* together with a good knot before Sukkos.
5. The Shelah notes that some people have the *minhag* to kiss the sukkah each time they enter and leave.

HOSHANA RABBAH

1. Many have the custom to stay awake all night on Hoshana Rabbah. Almost everyone has the custom to *daven* Shacharis early. Some say Tehillim at night, others *lein Chumash Devarim*, and some say a special *tikkun*.
2. *Shulchan Aruch* notes that one should shake the *aravos* (like the four *minim*) before banging them. Several reasons are given for the banging, which is a custom from the *Nevi'im*: a) one is symbolically destroying any bad decrees (*Knesses Hagedolah*); b) it is a form of *simcha*, like clapping or drumming (*Levush*); c) hitting the ground is a *siman* for destroying the enemy, as when Elisha Hanavi told Yo'ash to hit the ground with arrows before attacking Aram (*Otzar Dinim*); d) it is a sign for the ground to be fruitful this year (*Kesser Shem Tov*); and e) banging the *hoshanos* represents *yissurim* to wipe away sin. Some say we should do so to appreciate them.
3. Banged *hoshanos* can be stored anywhere, as can the branches of the four *minim*. *Chassidim* put them on top of the *aron kodesh*. Some keep them in the house or over the doorpost as a *shemirah*. Some sources say the *aravos* are a good *shemirah* for safe travels, and they should be taken along on the road. Others say they prevent nightmares

and should be placed near one's bed. One source says to place them near a bed to show love for the mitzvah. The custom to burn them on Erev Pesach is not to "burn them with the *chametz*," but to fuel the fire that burns the *chametz* with them in order to use them for another mitzvah. If you throw them in the fire after the *chametz* is burned, you miss the point!

SHEMINI ATZERES

Rav Chaim Palagi writes that any serious prayer is accepted on Shemini Atzeres. Rebbe Bunim of Gur said that *davening* with a *tzibbur* on Shemini Atzeres "fixes" any missed *minyanim* throughout the year.

ISRU CHAG

The Rema writes that it is customary to have extra food and drink in honor of this day. The Gemara (*Sukkah* 45b) seems to be the source. Some say it is important to use the parts of the sukkah in the same places from year to year, and when dismantling the sukkah, the parts should be marked for that purpose. This is learned from the Mishkan.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

"I ASK OF YOU, STAY WITH ME ONE MORE DAY. IT IS SO HARD WHEN YOU LEAVE!"

—Hashem, at the end of Sukkos

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