

The first message of *Sukkos* is the idea of “*Torah*” as represented by *Yaakov Avinu*. In order to properly learn Torah, we must do *Teshuvah* on *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*. Now, we are ready for *Sukkos*, a time when we uplift the mundane. In the *sukkah* itself, everything becomes holy! Eating, sleeping, just being in the *sukkah* is a *mitzvah*! Because *Chag HaSukkos* is a time when we leave the material world behind. We move into a small shack without all the “baggage” that distracts us from a true *Torah* life. We return to *Hashem* by moving into the *sukkah* which is truly the embrace of *Hashem*.

The second message of *Sukkos* is the message of “*Avodah*” as alluded to by *Yitzchok Avinu*. It is his manner of *Tefillah* which teaches us how to forge a lasting relationship with *Hashem*. *Tefillah* is known as עבודת שכלב - “*the service of the heart,*” for it is truly the heart that *Hashem* wants in our service to Him. The *Arba Minim* which we take in our hands on the *Yom Tov* of *Sukkos*, represent the four main parts of the body which we subjugate to *Hashem*. The *Esrog*, which represents the heart, is held separately and then combined with the head

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV AND HEMSHECH HADOROS

מחשבת הלב

FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT”L

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר ... וענף עץ אבט (ויקרא כג-כ) *Chazal* tell us that the *Arba Minim* (four species) correspond to various human organs. The *esrog* is connected to the heart. The *remez* is from the *sof teivos* (end letters) of “פרי עץ הדר” which spell the word “יצר”.

Perhaps the deeper meaning is that we should realize that it is totally normal for our hearts to have a *yetzer hara*. The question is only what we do with it? In *Krias Shema* we say “ואהבת את ה'... בכל לבבך”. We must love *Hashem* with both our hearts - the *yetzer tov* and the *yetzer hara*. We must realize that *Hashem* placed us on this earth to confront our evil inclination and to ultimately triumph over it (even if we sometimes fail) in order to earn eternal reward.

The *Hadasim* represent our eyes, as they are shaped as such. However, we know from the *Gemara* that the *hadass* must be *meshulash*. Its leaves must grow in groups of three. Now, as we know, people only have two eyes; so why does the *hadass* have to have three? It should have two, like our eyes! I once heard a *pshat* from a *chaver* of mine, R' Nachi Bohenski. He said two leaves are *kneged* our own eyes. The third is for *yenem* - to have an *ayin tova* for a fellow Jew. The *hadass* teaches us to always be on the lookout for ways to help out others.

There's an interesting phrase in *halacha* regarding the *hadass*. If it grows “*three leaves in a pattern of two leaves on top of a single leaf*” and not three evenly sprouted leaves, it is called a “*Hadas Shoteh.*” Why the name calling? The *pshat* could be, that if the two leaves (our

(the end of the spine) the lips and the eyes, as if to say, “*Hashem*, I put my heart into every single thing I do, for all of my actions are done out of love for You!”

The third and final message that *Sukkos* represents so beautifully, is the idea of “*Chessed*” which is the attribute of *Avraham Avinu*. It is the idea of love, kindness and unity amongst the Jewish people. *Chazal* teach us that the *Arba Minim* also represent every type of Jew - totally righteous, somewhat righteous, somewhat wicked, totally wicked - and by banding them all together, each member of *Klal Yisroel*, with his or her unique contribution to the Kingdom of *Hashem*, do we truly achieve our purpose in this world. It is only through acts of *Tzedakah* and *Gemilus Chassadim* (acts of kindness) that we can bring joy and *nachas* to our beloved “*Tatte in Himmel.*”

Is it any wonder that the joy of *Sukkos* is palpable when we raise ourselves up, thereby raising up the entire world through the *mitzvos* and good deeds that we do at this time? And is there any greater joy in life than knowing that we are fulfilling our mission and achieving true closeness - קרבת אלקים - bringing joy and *nachas* to *Hashem Yisbarach*?

eyes) are looking down at the single leaf below, it is indeed worthy of a demeaning name. Rather, all the leaves must be on the same level. And that is how *Hashem* wants us to look at our fellow *Yid*. We are all equal.

May we all soon be *zoche* to the rebuilding of the *Bais HaMikdash* and הנפלת!

המלאך הגואל אתי מכל רע יברך את הנערים (קל נערים בשמחת תורה) *On Simchas Torah*, at the culmination of our dancing the joyous and spirited *Hakafos*, we gather the children, young and old, under a *Talis* in a poignant moment, and recite the words, “המלאך הגואל אתי מכל רע”. Why was it chosen as the time to do this, and why *davka* on *Simchas Torah*?

“שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך: This is a reference to three *doros*, which brings to mind the *posuk* in *Koheles*: “והחוט המשולש לא במהרה ינתק”. *Chazal* explain that if there are three generations following in *Hashem's* ways, there will be an unbroken continuity going forward. Therefore, the next *posuk* continues with “בהנחל עליון גויים” an inheritance (based on **Baal HaTurim**).

We, as *frum Yidden*, recognize that our future depends on our children, who we valiantly inculcate with our rich *mesorah* and heritage. In *Birchas Kohanim* - which is recited by the *Kohanim* on *Yom Tov* - the first *beracha* ends with the word “וישמרך”. The *meforshim* say that this hints to *Hashem* blessing us with children. How does the word “וישמרך” (to watch) allude to children? Perhaps we can say that through having *ehrlliche children* we are watched and

from a long and illustrious career. His beloved *Rebbetzin* had passed on, and he lived alone in a one-room apartment. As his health deteriorated, he could no longer handle the chores of cooking and cleaning for himself. For the most part he was home bound and required assistance from members of the community.

One of the local women, Mrs. Tzirel Roznik, heard of the aging *Rebbi's* plight. It broke her heart. R' Zevulun had taught her own children. Indeed, he was the best *Rebbi* they had ever had. She took it upon herself to prepare meals, which she would send over with one of her children. Each week, one of her children would show up with a week's worth of meals, and would stay to clean and straighten up the apartment and do the laundry.

This practice went on for the remainder of R' Zevulun's life. Upon his passing, the whole Jewish community was in mourning. The Roznik family was also broken up, it was as if they themselves were sitting *shiva*.

The Jewish community of the town remained vibrant and populous all the way up until the invasion of the Nazi beasts. The once proud Jewish community was in turmoil trying to flee from the Nazi hoards, but there was no way out. The Nazis methodically surrounded the city and all of the Jews were being herded into the town square.

Max Frankel and his wife managed to slip out of the back of their home with their children. They were hiding in an alley not sure what to do. Suddenly, they saw a Jewish friend of theirs running past. He told them about two hiding places in town where Jews were holing up. One was in the building to the right and the other was in a cellar to the left. the man dashed off to the left. The Frankel's quickly decided to go to the one on the left. It was closer to them and easier to get to.

Suddenly, Mrs. Frankel halted in her tracks. She insisted that they switch to the other hiding place. Her husband didn't understand why she halted; in fact, proceeding to the other place presented more peril. Mrs. Frankel herself didn't understand what came over here. Logically, going to the left made sense. And yet, her inner premonition told her to take her family to the right. She simply had this powerful feeling that this was the right way to go and she was adamant.

They safely found their way to the other place and managed to hide there with some other families, among them, Mrs. Frankel's first cousin and his family. They remained there till the “storm” passed, and were eventually able to get out of Nazi Europe. They later learned that the hiding place on the left was actually a Gestapo trap and all who hid there were deported to the death camps. The inexplicable sense that caused Mrs. Frankel to turn around actually saved their lives.

It turns out that Mrs. Frankel and her cousins are grandchildren of Mrs. Tzirel Roznik, and the room they hid in - the chamber that shielded them from the Nazi tempest - was the very apartment lived in by R' Zevulun - the man whom their grandmother fed and cared for, in his old age. The *mitzvos* she performed there many years earlier, saved her family years later.

משל למה הדבר דומה

שישו ושמחו בשמחת התורה ותנו כבוד לתורה ... אהודנו בסוד עם קרובו אלקי צורי אחסו בו (פיוט לשמחת תורה)

משל: A story is told about the legendary *Lubavitcher Chasid, Reb Mendel Futerfas z”l*, during the time he was imprisoned in a Siberian Gulag. Reb Mendel was known to find a lesson in everything he encountered.

Reb Mendel's cellmates were not Jewish and had little to keep themselves entertained. However, one man smuggled a deck of cards into the prison and at night, the men would sit around and play cards. Reb Mendel didn't play with them but he was just happy that their attention was diverted from bothering him to their card games. Of course, in Siberia, a deck of cards was contraband and if the men were caught, they would face stiff punishment. The warden had a suspicion when he heard lots of talking and fun being had in the cell, but no matter how many times he came in to check the cell, he could never find the actual deck of cards. Even Reb Mendel could not figure out how they managed to conceal it time and time again from the warden's prying eyes.

One time, the warden heard sounds of fun again and swiftly came running in. It all happened so fast. This time he ordered everyone to stand back and empty their pockets and not move until he kicked over all the flimsy mattresses. He searched each man as well as the entire cell. But once again,

he was unsuccessful. Reb Mendel was so curious. How did the cards disappear so quickly and so thoroughly?

Later, he approached one of his cellmates, Gregory, and asked him the question.

The Russian smiled and said, “You see that guy over there?” He pointed to a small, scurrilous man, who was moving quickly from side to side. “Do you know who he is? He was the best pickpocket in Moscow. He stole so much from people because he has the quickest hands. So, when the warden comes in looking for the cards, he hides them in the only place the warden would never think to look - the warden's own pocket! The warden checks the whole cell and then, on his way out, the pickpocket takes the cards back.”

נמשל: The *Yemei Hadin* and *Sukkos* have passed and now, on *Simchas Torah*, we exult with *Hashem's* most precious possession. Why? Because all year long, we are searching for the *Torah*, we are longing for it and we wish to learn it and follow it. Suddenly, today it all becomes clear. It was with us, actually inside of us all along! The realization that we have the *Torah* and all that we need to fulfill it properly, is a cause for so much joy and celebration that we dance deliriously on this holiday and we thank *Hashem* for this precious gift.

“Look, Shia, if there’s any way I can help you, I surely will. Tell me, what items do you need to store?”
 “A folding bed ... and if it’s not asking too much, we also have a highchair we won’t be needing for a good few months.”
 Mayer’s jaw dropped!
 Mayer has told this story to many skeptics, so he knows how to emphasize the *hashgachah pratis*. “Maybe he heard we were looking for a mattress, but there was absolutely no way that Shia could have known that the night before, Sarah and I were talking about needing a highchair! Clearly our needs were known by the One Who takes care of all our needs!” (M. Wikler)

ובנענועו אותם תשפיע שפע ברכות מדעת עליון ... ותהא חשובה לפנך מצות ארבעה מינים (סדר נטילה לולב)

In today’s day and age, if one wants an *esrog*, he goes out to the local “*shuk*” - usually a marketplace where the *Arba Minim* and everything conceivably related to the *Yom Tov* of *Sukkos* is sold, and in a few minutes he can have for himself a choice specimen. But it wasn’t always like this and in years’ past, weeks of advance preparation were often required just to procure a single *esrog*. Professional *Arba Minim* merchants would travel far and wide scouring city after city looking for “*schora*” to be able to sell, and in some cases, to deliver as a guest to an honorable rabbi or distinguished guest.

In the village of Mogelnitz, right after *Rosh Hashana* was over, **R’ Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapira ז”ל** would give a sizable sum of money to an agent and send him out to purchase the most beautiful *esrog* he could find for the entire community. More than one *esrog* could not be expected and the custom in town was that after the *Rebbe* performed the *mitzvah* on *Yom Tov*, the townspeople would then line up and fulfill it for themselves.

One year, it was extremely difficult to procure a beautiful *esrog*; they were all blemished. As *Yom Tov* approached, the agent traveled from place to place, but without much success. Finally, he arrived at a village where he heard that a certain rich man had managed to buy the most exceptional *esrog* imaginable. The agent hurried to the rich man’s house. But he was nervous. How could he convince this stranger to part with his *esrog*? All he could do was express his feelings.

When he knocked on the door, the rich man asked him what he wanted. He explained to the householder about R’ Chaim Meir Yechiel Shapira; that he was a great *tzaddik*, an exalted person for whom performing every *mitzvah* in an enhanced manner was an integral aspect of life. He wished to buy the man’s *esrog* for the great *Rebbe*.

The wealthy man sat silently for a few minutes, thinking deeply. Then he said, “You say your rabbi is a big *tzaddik*? Well, I’ll tell you what, I have a deal for him” said the rich man. “I paid a handsome sum for this *esrog*. Thank G-d, I can afford it. But there is one thing I cannot buy with all the money in the world. My wife and I have no children. I am prepared to ‘sell’ you my *esrog* but my non-negotiable price is that your holy rabbi should bless us to have a child, and that his blessing should come true within a reasonable period of time. If it does, the *esrog* is my gift to him. But if not, then retroactively your great rabbi and your entire community will not have fulfilled the *mitzvah*.”

Silence filled the room as the stunned agent was unable to respond. How can he take responsibility for such a proposition? Finally, he decided that he had no choice and accepted the proposal, after which he set off straight for home.

R’ Chaim Meir’s joy knew no bounds when he saw the *esrog* - until the agent told him the condition of the “transaction.” For a long time R’ Chaim Meir sat still, head in his hands, engulfed in his lofty thoughts.

“All right,” he finally stated, softly but firmly. “I accept upon myself this difficult condition. I will do that which I am able so that this man and his wife should have a child. Now it is up to the Almighty to do His part.”

About a year later, a small package arrived for R’ Chaim Meir. Inside was an *esrog* of superior quality, along with a note from the rich man announcing that a son had been born to him and his wife. R’ Chaim Meir was overjoyed at the news, as he could now fully rejoice over his *mitzvah* of the previous *Sukkos*, which no longer had a shadow of doubt cast over it. Every year, from then on, the *Rebbe* would receive a beautiful *esrog* from the grateful rich man.

One year, the messenger who delivered the *esrog* was a young *yeshivah* student. “My father requested that I deliver this *esrog* to the honorable Rabbi,” said the young *bochur*. R’ Chaim Meir stared at the youth. Tears welled up in his eyes. He placed his hand on the boy’s head. “Not only are you the bearer of an *esrog*,” he said, “you are the son of an *esrog*!”

כי יצפנני בסכה ביום רעה יסתירני בסתר אהלו בצור ידוממני ועתה ירום ראשי על איבי סביבותי ... (תהלים כז-ה)

When we sit in the *sukkah* - a temporary structure with an open roof - it reminds us that it is not the building that protects us, but, it is *Hashem* Who is protecting us. The more and more *mitzvos* that we do, the more and more Divine protection we merit, often in the most unexpected ways. The following story brings this point home.

In the late 1800’s, there lived a *Rebbi* in a small city in Poland. R’ Zevulun as he was affectionately known, was one of the best and most beloved *Torah* teachers in the local *Yeshivah*. He was known for his erudition, dedication and gentle warmth. He and his *Rebbetzin* never merited having children, and indeed he treated his *talmidim* as if they were his own children.

The years rolled on, and eventually R’ Zevulun could no longer handle the physical demands of teaching, so he retired

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protected, secure in the knowledge that *Klal Yisrael* will go and deliver the message of what our *mesorah* is all about and flourish. and what is truly important in life. May we all utilize this auspicious time to *daven* for our children, others’ children, and for those who have not yet been blessed with children, and may הקב"ה listen to our supplications, and shower us with *yeshuos*, *refuos*, and a *git kvittel*.

On *Simchas Torah*, the culmination of *zman simchaseinu*, we dance with the holy *Torah*, our everlasting legacy, proclaiming in song, "ותרת ה' תממנה". It is precisely at this point that we envelop our children in a *talis*, *benich* them

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

בסוכות תשבו שבועת ימים כל האזרח בישראל ישבו בסוכות ... (ויקרא כג-טב)

Mayer Isaacs * is a tall, low-keyed, somewhat reserved *kollel yungerman* who lives in the Har Nof neighborhood of Jerusalem, with his wife Sarah, and son Pinny. Mayer and Sarah are models of *emunah* and *bitachon* - faith and trust in *Hashem*. This is how they live their lives. A good example of the Isaacs’ *middos* is their commitment to *hachmasas orchim*. Even before they got married, Mayer and Sarah agreed that their home must always be open to guests. However much or little they would have, they felt, was a gift from Heaven which must be shared with others. So even though there were times when they did not know exactly how they would make ends meet, they still made it a point never to refuse a guest.

A few weeks before *Sukkos*, Zev Eisner, a *Baal Teshuva* studying in *Aish HaTorah* in Jerusalem and a frequent *Shabbos* guest, asked Mayer if it was alright if he came for *Chag HaSukkos*. Mayer was thrilled to have him but told Zev that he needed to just okay it with his wife first. That evening, Mayer told Sarah of Zev’s request. “He wants to come for *Sukkos*?” Sarah could not contain her surprise. “Of course, I’d love to have him for the week. But where would he sleep?”

“He’ll be sleeping with me in the *sukkah* all week,” Mayer explained. “So I don’t think he’ll really be in the way.”

“I’m not concerned about him ‘being in the way’! I love having guests. But we have no extra bed,” Sarah pointed out. “That’s true,” Mayer acknowledged. “But I’m sure that between now and *Sukkos*, we’ll be able to borrow at least a mattress for him. If he was asking us this much in advance, he must really want to be with us. How could we not agree?”

Sarah agreed. Mayer called Zev the same evening to confirm that he would be coming for the entire week of *Sukkos*. As *Yom Tov* approached, Sarah found that the presumably simple task of borrowing a mattress proved more formidable than she and Mayer had anticipated. The neighbors across the hall were having company and could not spare any beds. Other friends across the street were planning to be away for *Yom Tov* but they were renting out their apartment to a family who would need every bed. And so it was with everyone else Sarah asked. Two days before *Sukkos*, Sarah began to get worried. She still had no bed or even a mattress for Zev. Sarah mentioned her concern to Mayer. “It’s almost *Sukkos* and we haven’t been able to find a bed for Zev,” Sarah noted uneasily. “What will we do?”

“I’m sure *Hashem* will help us,” Mayer encouraged his wife. “We are only trying to do His will. *Hashem* has been so good to us in the past. I’m certain He will help us now, too.”

“I just wish I had your *bitachon*, Mayer,” Sarah confided. “But you know, a bed for Zev is not the only furniture we need now. Little Pinny is getting bigger and I can no longer feed him in his infant seat. What we really need now is a highchair.”

“I wish we could afford to buy one, Sarah. But you know how impossible it is for us to buy something that expensive now. If we do not have the money to buy a highchair it means that we can probably manage for a little while longer without one. *Hashem* has always given us whatever we really needed in the past. Look, we were childless for almost nine years. Then *Hashem* answered our *tefillos* and Pinny was born. I know He will help us now, too.”

The next day was *Erev Sukkos*. Even Mayer had begun to feel that his *emunah* was being tested. He still had no bed for Zev, who would be arriving in a few hours to spend the week with them. Not one to waste a minute, Mayer went out onto the porch to complete building his *sukkah*. All the materials were there, but not yet assembled. Since it rarely rains in *Eretz Yisrael* during that time of the year, Mayer planned to spend *Erev Sukkos* erecting his *sukkah*.

Two hours into his construction work, Mayer was high atop a ladder with three nails in his mouth, a hammer in one hand and a heavy cross beam in the other. That’s when the doorbell rang. Mayer got down from his perch to see who was at the door. It was Shia, another transplanted American *kollel yungerman*, who lived down the block.

“I’m sorry to bother you on *Erev Sukkos*, Mayer, but I need a favor. You know we’ve been a bit crowded at home since our baby was born. And now my younger brother will be living with us for a few months until he can find a bed in the *yeshivah* dormitory. What I really need is a little storage space.”

“Okay, Shia, tell me how I can help.”

“Well ... we have a couple of things we don’t need right now but we’d rather not sell because we’ll probably need them in the future. And if you have room to store them in your apartment for a while, it would give us a bit more room while my brother is with us.”

* All Names have been changed for privacy