

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
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Succos





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# Torah Wellsprings

## Succos

### Preparing for the Yom Tov

The holy days of Succos are approaching, and there is a lot to discuss. We will go in order, from the day following Yom Kippur until Simchas Torah and discuss some fundamental lessons to help us prepare for these spectacular days.

Chassidim say that the preparation for a mitzvah is greater than the actual performance of the mitzvah. Rebbe Dovid of Tolna *zt'l* proves this from the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos. As we will discuss further on, Klal Yisrael doesn't have any aveiros on those days. The atonement of Yom Kippur continues until Succos arrives because people are busy buying the *arba minim*, building the *succah*, etc. They are preparing for

mitzvos, and that atones their sins.

On Succos, when they perform these mitzvos, they don't merit this special atonement. This proves that the *הכנה*, preparation for mitzvos, is greater than the mitzvos themselves.

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* proves this concept from the *simchas beis hashoeivah* in the Beis HaMikdash. Every night of Succos (other than Shabbos and Yom Tov), there was a grand celebration in the Beis HaMikdash with music and immense joy, as they celebrated the mitzvah *ניסוך המים*, pouring water on the *mizbeiach*, which is a mitzvah unique to Succos.

The celebrations were conducted as they were preparing for the mitzvah, such as when they drew

the water and brought it to the Beis HaMikdash.

Chazal say, "Whoever didn't see the joy of the *simchas beis hashoeivah*, never experienced joy in his lifetime." And Chazal say that people drew (שוואבה) *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.

This proves that the preparation of a mitzvah is greater than the mitzvah itself.

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

It states (*Hosheia* 14:10), צדִיקִים יִלְכוּ בָם וּפּוֹשְׁעִים יִכְשְׁלוּ בָם. The *pasuk* is hinting that *tzaddikim* prepare for the mitzvos, but the *resha'im*, יִכְשְׁלוּ בָם, just fall into the mitzvah, without any prior preparation.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Some buy an *esrog pushka*, a silver *esrog* box, as a gift to a *chasan*. This *hidur mitzvah* (glorifying the mitzvah) is different than most *hidur mitzvah*. For example, a silver Chanukah menorah becomes part of the mitzvah. A silver *becher* for *kiddush* and *havdalah* becomes part of the mitzvah. But the silver *esrog* box is used before and after the mitzvah, not during the mitzvah. This is because the *esrog* represents the heart, and the heart of a mitzvah is expressed primarily by how we prepare *before* the mitzvah, and how much joy we feel *after* performing the mitzvah. Thus, the joy and the preparations are primary aspects of this mitzvah.

### G-t's Numen

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

1) The Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* explains that for ten days we said המלך הקדוש, and now we resume saying once again 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* taught: 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 immediately after Yom Kippur, everyone forgot how to pronounce the name (because the correct pronunciation of Hashem's name must remain a secret, known only to a select few, see *Kiddushin* 71.). On the morning after Yom Kippur,

everyone asked one another, "Do you remember how the *kohen gadol* pronounced Hashem's name?" but no one remembered. And since everyone was asking and speaking about *G-t's numen*, the day after Yom Kippur is called *G-t's numen*.

3) Rebbe Moshe Mordechai Lelover *zt'l* related a story that happened to his grandfather, Rebbe Dovid of Lelov:

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zy'a* heard a *melamed* teach a young child, "When you see two letter 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 [colon] 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 one."

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov said that 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's name doesn't reside there.

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai repeated this story and said: After Yom Kippur, everyone is cleansed from sins, 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 is equal, and Hashem's name is there.

The first day of Succos is called יום ראשון לחשבון עונות, the first day of counting

sins because the purity of Yom Kippur extends until the first day of Succos. On this day we take an אתרוג, which tzaddikim said is *roshei teivos* for אל תביאני רגל גאוה, "don't bring me to arrogance." By taking the *esrog*, we are praying that we should remain equal to all Yidden; we should always be pure from sins. It should never be that one feels higher than another, and then Hashem's name will always be with us.

### **From Yom Kippur to Succos**

We don't fast, and we don't say *tachanun* on the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos. What is special about these days?

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

They are also happy days because the *kaparah* (atonement) of Yom Kippur extends and continues until Succos. We are clean from sin on these days. As 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 referred to as "the first day?" when it is, in fact, the 15th day of Tishrei.

The Midrash answers, יום ראשון לחשבון עונות, "It's the first day for the reckoning of *aveiros*..." The atonement of Yom Kippur continues until the first day of Succos. Therefore, the first day of Succos is the first day of sin.

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 of your past

*aveiros*. But now begins a new *cheshbon* (count)."

The Shlah Hakadosh (Succah, Torah Or, 2) explains this purity as follows:

"During the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos the Jewish nation is busy serving Hashem: They build a *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, and the word שטן is gematriya 364. The Gemara (*Yoma* 20.) explains, "364 days in the year 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 letter ה as a prefix. שטן (without the ה) is gematriya 359. This

indicates that the Satan can only slander the Jewish nation 359 days a year. There are six days a year that the Satan can't speak on 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 אעלוזה אחלקה שכם ועמק סוכות אמדד. Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz *zt'l* translates it as follows: אלקים אעלוז, דיבר בקדשו Hashem said, – ה', I rejoice with the five days of atonement, which are Yom Kippur and the four days until Succos.

אחלקה-ה' I divide these five days from, שכם which is *gematriya* 360. Hashem says "אחלקה שכם" I separate these five days from the remaining 360 days of the year."

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 up to 20 *amos* high, and each *amah* is comprised of 6 tefachim. Additionally, a *succah* requires at least three walls. So, the equation is  $20 \times 6 \times 3 = 360$ .

The pasuk is providing a solution for the 360 days of the year. There are 365 days in a year, and five of them are days of atonement. In addition, ועמק סוכות אמדד, the measurements of the *succah* - 360 *tefeachim*, project holiness to the other 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 טפחות נתתה ימי, that the days of the year receive their spirituality from טפחות, 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 yours? 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, and therefore their Torah is so precious. 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 studies will also sustain the world, because on those days he is clean from sin.

Furthermore, an adult is a *מצווה ועושה*, obligated to study Torah (while a child isn't) and the value of an obligatory mitzvah is greater than a mitzvah performed voluntarily. This is the uniqueness of Torah study on these days of purity.

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

We aren't on that level, and we can focus on Torah study on the four days after Yom Kippur, and we should! Our studies at this time 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 near? *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 that there are only seven days between Rosh Hashanah

and Yom Kippur! So why does the Gemara say that there are ten days?

The Shlah answers that the Gemara is hinting at the ten days between *Yom Kippur* and *Hoshanah Rabba*.

He explains:

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."

### ***Erev Succos***

Rebbe Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* (who was always extremely generous to the poor) increased his *tzedakah* on *erev Succos* and distributed 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."

### ***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*."

Why is it important to have guests on Succos?

The *Zohar* teaches that on Succos the seven *ushpizen*: Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, and Dovid come to our *succos* to

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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*, good seal for the new year.

celebrate with us. When they arrive, they check to see if any guests are present. 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>4</sup>

Rebbe Eliezer of Dzikiv *zt'l* was particularly cautious to have a guest on

4. 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 say, "I have a simple mitzvah; it is called *succah*. Keep this mitzvah [and you will be rewarded together with the Jewish nation]!"

The Gemara continues, "Immediately, they will all go up and build a *succah* on their rooftops. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will have the sunshine brightly, it will become extremely hot for them, and they will all kick their *succos* and leave."

The Gemara explains that Yidden also leave the *succah* when it's very hot, for the halachah is, מצטער פטור מן הסוכה, someone who is in distress is exempt from *succah*. But a Yid doesn't kick the *succah* when he leaves. The nations of the world will kick the *succah* in distain, and thereby proving that they don't deserve reward.

*B'derech tzachus* we can say, why do the nations of the world build their *succos* specifically on their rooftops? It is because they don't want people knocking at their door, asking for a meal. The Jews, on the other hand, seek 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. A non-Jew can have emunah in Hashem when everything goes well for him. But when things heat up and times are hard, they kick the *succah*. They no longer believe in Hashem.

the first day of Succos because it is the *ushpizen* of Avraham Avinu, who excelled in *hachnassas orchim*.

One year, on the first day of Succos, the Dzikiver Rebbe didn't have a guest, so he asked his son (the Imrei Noam *zt'l*) to go outside and find someone who needs a yom tov meal. The son walked around the streets until he found a homeless person, the type of person people generally don't want in their homes. "Come with me," he said to the poor man. "My father invites you to eat your yom tov seudah together with him."

The Dzikiver Rebbe was very happy with his guest, and he served him the yom tov meal. The Dzikiver Rebbe said, "Avraham Avinu didn't have better guests. Avraham cared so much about people that he was eager to bring home anyone who desired a meal. At least, on this day,

we should emulate Avraham Avinu's ways."

## Unity

One of the themes of the yom tov Succos is unity. The succah and the four minim represent how all Yidden are united (as we will explain). We made peace on erev Yom Kippur, and now it is time to rejoice with our unity.

Furthermore, the *Sfas Emes* (Yom Kippur 651) explains, "All neshamos are inherently united; it is sin that draws people apart." Therefore, after the atonement of Yom Kippur, all Yidden can have *ahavas Yisrael* and unity, without any feelings of division.

The succah represents the oneness of the Jewish nation. As it states, כל האזרה בישׂראל ישבו בסוכות and the Gemara (*Succah* 27) explains, "all Yidden can dwell in the same *succah*." All Yidden in the same succah means peace between them, and they agree to be

together under the same roof.

The four minim also represent unity. The Midrash (*VaYikra Rabba* 30:12) teaches that the *esrog* (which has a pleasing scent and a good flavor) represents Torah scholars who do good deeds. The *lulav* (from a date tree) represents flavor without the smell (because dates have taste but no scent). This represents the Torah scholars who lack good deeds. *Hadasim* have a good smell but no taste. They represent the Yidden who do good deeds but don't study Torah. The *aravah* has neither scent nor flavor. They represent the Yidden who lack both qualities. They contain no Torah and no mitzvos.

"Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, tie them in one bundle so they will bring atonement to one another." The people on lower levels are atoned because they are part of the holy Jewish nation.

Even tzaddikim and Torah scholars must unite with other Yidden - and even with the lowly ones. This is represented by the *esrog*, which isn't valid without the other three species. As the *Beer Heitev* (645:9) writes "Esrog is *gematriya* 610. When combined with the other three species, the *gematriya* is 613." Perfection is when all four categories of Yidden unite.

Many people in Yerushalayim would bring their four minim (that they were considering to buy) to Reb Shimon Aharon Polonski *zt'l*, the Tepliker Rav, to ask him 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 he could help them with the yom tov expenses.

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

The Tepliker Rav responded, "who says you have to buy the four minim? You can use someone else's to perform the mitzvah. 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 erase."

The Tepliker Rav once actually followed this counsel. One year, on the first day of Succos, the Tepliker Rav asked someone to lend him his *esrog* (in a manner specified in Shulchan Aruch that works even for the first day of Succos). He had a lulav, hadasim and aravos, but he didn't own an *esrog*. This is what happened:

*Erev* Succos, the Tepliker Rav heard shouts and cries coming forth from his neighbor's home, so he knocked on their door to see what happened.

This was a broken family. The father died, and the children were orphans. Although the mother remarried, things weren't smooth and perfect in that family.

At the door, they told him that one of the children broke the pitom on the stepfather's *esrog*. "The step-father is now in the mikvah, but we are worried about his reaction when he finds out."

The Tepliker Rav understood what they meant. He might rebuke the orphan harshly for breaking the pitom, and he might be angry with his wife, too, for allowing the children to touch the *esrog*. The Tepliker Rav told them, "When your step-father comes home, tell him that I asked to see his *esrog*, and I ruled that it was *pasul*. You don't have to tell him that it broke. I will bring you my own *esrog* and tell him to use that one."

Therefore, that year, the Tepliker Rav didn't have an esrog. He had to borrow an esrog from someone in his shul. Someone else's shalom bayis and simchas yom tov were more important to him than owning his own four minim.

A similar story happened with Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz zt'l. Throughout the year, Rebbe Mordechai put aside money to buy the four *minim*. One year, as he was going to buy an *esrog*, he saw a simple Yid, crying bitterly. "What's the matter?"

The man told him that his horse died. "I'm a delivery man. The horse was my source of parnassah, and I don't have money to buy another one."

Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz gave him money to buy a horse, and with the leftover money, he bought an esrog. It wasn't the most beautiful esrog,

but it was all he could afford with the extra money.

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 how it happened.

### Staying Focused

Someone driving in a shiny new Mercedes approached the border. The customs officials checked his luggage to see whether he was smuggling any merchandise across the border, but all they found were buckets of soil. "What's this for?" they asked.

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

They didn't believe him. It didn't make sense that anyone would import soil just to save a few pennies, certainly not a wealthy person driving a Mercedes. They sifted through the earth expecting to find something hidden there, but they couldn't find anything, so they let him pass.

The following day, he once again arrives at the border again, in his Mercedes, with a trunk-full of dirt. They sifted through the soil again, didn't find anything, and sent him on his way. This happened every day, and after a while, they stopped sifting through the earth, because they saw that there was nothing there but dirt.

One day, he came to the border and told the guards that he wouldn't be coming

anymore. "I finished building my house, so there's no reason for me to bring any more earth."

The border police couldn't contain their curiosity any longer, and they asked him: "Tell us the real reason you carried dirt over the border every day. Was it just to save a few pennies?"

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

They promised, and he said, "I was smuggling Mercedes cars. Every day, I drove a different, similar-looking, brand-new Mercedes. The soil was just a coy."

The soil caused the police to focus on a triviality and to lose sight of the greater felony that was occurring. Had he driven through with just the Mercedes (without the soil), they would have suspected that he was smuggling the car.

The nimshal is, there is a lot to focus on these days. We should focus on being happy, on the greatness of the mitzvos, on the lessons of the mitzvos, etc. But then something trivial happens, and people turn all their focus to that matter. We must remember that we don't have time for that. There are greater things to think about at this time.

Here's another mashal that reminds us to stay focused on what's important:

The doctor's waiting room wasn't air-conditioned, and it wasn't well furnished, either. It was evident that the worn-out tiled floor hadn't been washed for quite a while. And, as always, the doctor was behind schedule.

Most people waiting for their appointment accepted these discomforts in silence. It wasn't their first time here, and they were accustomed to these

matters. They kept coming back because the doctor was from the best in his field.

A first-timer was waiting for his turn with the doctor, and he was quite upset with the service. Unlike the others who accepted their fate in silence, he spoke out loudly. "I never saw anything like this in my life. A doctor should care about his patients. Why isn't the air conditioning? Why are the chairs so uncomfortable? Why is this room dingy? And why can't this doctor keep to his schedule? My appointment was supposed to be an hour ago! I used to go to Dr. Ploni... He has a beautiful, tastefully furnished waiting room, and an automatic air conditioning system controls the room temperature. And he also keeps to his schedule."

"Is he a good doctor?" the people in the room

wanted to know. "Are his patients happy with him?"

"Actually, I never heard anyone say a good word about him. And that's why I changed doctors. He isn't the sharpest guy around if you know what I mean. I don't know how he ever graduated college... But the waiting room is first class..."

The *nimshal* is: The *succah* will be beautifully decorated, the four *minim* will be the most expensive 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 during these days.

The Gemara (*Succah* 3) teaches that ראשו ורובו ושולחנו בתוך הסוכה, one's head, most of his body, and table need to be inside the *succah*.

The Sfas Emes explains that this *halachah* hints that

one's entire being - his heart, mind, and soul - need to be in the *succah*. He shouldn't be sitting in the *succah*, and his head and heart are elsewhere. He should be totally *there*.

The table represents his family - his wife and children. They must also be in the *succah*. The head of the family must bring them into the ambiance and joy of the *succah* and the yom tov.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (625:1) writes, "When one sits in the *succah* he should have in mind that Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded us to sit in a *succah* to remember *yetzias Mitzrayim* and the ענני כבוד, clouds of glory, which Hashem wrapped around us in the desert to protect us from the elements. By having these thoughts in mind, he will accomplish the mitzvah properly. However, *bidi'eved*, one fulfills the mitzvah merely by thinking that he is performing the mitzvah."

Generally, having in mind the reason for the mitzvah is 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 reflect on why we have this mitzvah. As the Sfas Emes taught, ראשו רובו ושולחנו being and mind should be inside the *succah*.

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

The Meiri explains, "If a person eats matzah on Pesach and sits in a *succah* [on Succos, and he doesn't think about what he is

doing], he is like a donkey that carries wheat during the wheat harvest and grapes during the grape harvest season." The donkey gets no benefit from the valuable load it carries.

When possible, one should study sefarim to learn more about the mitzvos, so that he can have these ideas in mind while performing the mitzvos. As 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 *Ushpezin* who visit him in the succah, he will yearn with all his heart for this mitzvah...because the mitzvah of *succah* is very great."

But when one doesn't know the reasons, he should focus on the fact that he is doing a mitzvah before Hashem. This fundamental thought

elevates the mitzvah to  
very high levels.<sup>5</sup>

**The Succah is for  
Everyone**

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

A gentile child was murdered, and false witnesses were hired to testify in court that a Yid killed the child to use his blood for baking 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 witnessed didn't contradict each other and their testimony stood strong. The lives of all Jews 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 victim and is able to determine who is the murderer."

The judge agreed to put it to test. The judge told the townspeople to gather in the town square. (The Yidden were also there, with their *Tehillims* in their hands, praying for a miracle.) The judge had a dog smell the blood-stained clothing, and the dog ran 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 a blood libel.

Reb Eliyah Lopian said, "The dog didn't know that it was saving the Jewish community from a pogrom. It only knew how to smell blood and to identify the person with the same scent. However, when we keep the mitzvos (succah, lulav, etc.) we should know what we're doing. We should realize that our mitzvos have the power to protect the world and to bring down enormous *hashpaos tovos*."

Everyone can relate to the holiness of the succah. Don't think that you are too low to experience this holiness.

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

Chazal (Succah 22.) also 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 thick, coarse and

*gashmiyosdig*. The succah is for them too.

This is also hinted by the lulav, which one shakes in all directions (see Succah 37.; מוליך ומביא מעלה ומוריד). This indicates that even those who are מוליך going away from the kedushah, they can מביא, return, because on Succos, everyone can return to Hashem.<sup>6</sup>

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

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

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6. Chazal say (Succah 25:) מצטער פטור מן הסוכה, if someone has distress in the succah, he is *patur*, exempt from this mitzvah. The Kotzker zt'l explained that when a person sits in the holy succah, his joy is intense. How can he feel any distress there? He should be so happy, until he doesn't feel any discomfort at all. If he feels the discomfort, that's a sign that he is *patur*, detached from the mitzvah.

Rebbe Yechiel of Alexander *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 בושת, 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 האורח. The translation of אורח is, "I will shine." It is in the future tense. It means: Although right now I am not worthy of entering the *succah*, in the merit that I will improve my ways, I can come into the *succah*. As Chazal (*Kiddushin* 40.) say, "When one has a good thought, Hashem considers it as though he did it already."

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

### In Hashem's Presence

The Rema, beginning of Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 1:1) writes, "One should always remember that he is in Hashem's presence, as it states שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד. This is a great rule in Torah, and it is the *madreigah* of the tzaddikim who go before Hashem. Because the way a person sits, moves, and works when he is alone in his home isn't the same as when he is before a great king. The way a person speaks freely when he is

with family and friends isn't the same as when he is in the presence of a king. Therefore, certainly, when a person thinks about how the great king, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, whose honor fills the entire world, is there before him, and He sees all his deeds, as it states, *אם יסתר איש במסתרים ואני לא אראנו נאם ה'* 'If a person hides in a hidden place, won't I see him?' says Hashem.' [When a person thinks about this], he will immediately be grasped with immense fear and humility before Hashem..."

These ideas apply every day of the year and for all people. However, it is even more so when one sits in a succah. As the Zohar (vol.3 103:) states, "When a person dwells under the shadow of emunah [the succah] the Shechinah spreads out His wings above him."

Remember that Hashem is with you, watching all your deeds, and this will

prompt you to act accordingly.

The Reishis Chachmah (Shaar HaKedushah ch.4) writes, "This was the custom of my rebbe [the Remak zt'l]; he wouldn't speak in the succah throughout the holiday, other than words of Torah because the succah has great holiness. A proof to that is that the schach of the succah has *kedushah* all seven days (see Succah 9.)."

Similarly, the Mishnah Berurah (תרל"ט סק"ב) writes, "Since the holiness of the succah is so great, it is proper to speak less *divrei chol*, mundane talk, there. Rather, speak holy words of Torah. Certainly, be cautious that you don't speak *lashon hara* there or other forbidden words."

The Shlah warned that one shouldn't get angry in the succah. The holiness is great, we are before Hashem, and we must act accordingly.

## The Holiness of the Succah

One of the laws of the succah is that it must be at least ten tefachim high. The Gemara (Succah 4:) says that this is because the Shechinah never descended to this world beneath ten tefachim. For example, in the Mishkan, the Shechinah dwelled above the aron, ten tefachim high. We never find the Shechinah going lower than that. Therefore, the succah must be at least ten tefachim high.

The Chesed L'Avraham and the Sfas Emes (ת"מ"ב ד"ה) (כת"ב) say that this hints to the holiness of the succah. The Shechinah resides on the succah.<sup>7</sup>

According to halachah, a succah must contain at least two complete walls and one smaller wall, even the length of a tefach. The holy sefarim explain that this represents an arm with two long parts and then the *tefach*, the hand. The succah has these dimensions because when we are in the succah we are being hugged by Hashem.

In heaven, Hashem dwells in His inner chamber and His outer chamber. The innermost chamber is a place of joy. As Chazal say, after the churban Beis HaMikdash Hashem cries in His outer chambers and is happy in his innermost chambers. Going into the succah is like entering Hashem's innermost

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

chambers in heaven, which is a place of joy. As it states (Shir HaShirim 1:4) הביאני המלך הדריו, "The king brought me into His [innermost] chambers. בגיילה ונשמחה בך, "I rejoice with You."

The schach is called צל. Zohar calls the succah צילא דמיהמנותא, the shade (or shadow) of emunah. The Ropshitzer Rav zt'l (זרע קודש) (ליל א' סוכות) explains that a shadow mimics a person's movements. Similarly, we sit under the schach, and this is a shadow image of something much more significant that is happening above in heaven. Because as we sit in the succah below, Hashem is bringing us into His innermost chambers in heaven.

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

*mamash* in the upper worlds."

The Yaaras Dvash (vol.1 drush 6) writes, "Above the succah is Hashem's cloud. Although we don't see it, nevertheless, it is certain and true that whoever sits in the succah *leshem shamayim* and studies Torah there, and he is happy with the holiday, and with the mitzvos, Hashem's cloud hovers above him."<sup>8</sup>

There are different customs regarding singing Shalom Aleichim Friday night during Succos. The Shem MiShmuel discusses the custom not to sing Shalom Aleichem. He explains that the kedushah of the succah is so great, the malachim can't be present there.

For those who do say Shalom Aleichem, there is a discussion whether one should first say Shalom

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

Aleichem to greet the malachim or whether he should begin with inviting the holy Ushpizin the succah?

Someone told the Satmar Rebbe zt'l that he thinks we should invite the malachim first, because of the rule that 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 inviting the Ushpizin, and therefore Shalom Aleichem should be first.)

The Satmar Rebbe disagreed. He said that although the words of the Shalom Aleichem are the same each week, they malachim aren't. Because the malachim that accompany a person home on Shabbos are dependent on his deeds and preparation during the week. The Satmar Rebbe concluded, "In my opinion, the Ushpizin should be invited first, because the Ushpizin are tzaddikim,

and tzaddikim are greater than malachim.

It is impossible to sufficiently speak about the holiness of the succah because as much as we say, it is just the beginning.

Remarkably, we can feel the kedushah of the holy succah.

The Shem MiShmuel (5673) writes:

Rashi teaches that many animals came to Noach's *teivah*, but only the animals that didn't sin could enter the *teivah*. Those who sinned were banned from entering.

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

The Shem MiShmuel writes, "If the *succah* accepts a person, he will experience a very good feeling when he sits in the *succah*. But, *chas veshalom*, if the *succah* doesn't accept him, he will

not be happy there... Therefore, if one enjoys the *succah*, that is an indication that the *succah* accepted him."

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

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

The 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*.

The Keren l'Dovid writes, "When one sits in the *succah leshem shamayim*, he feels the holiness with *hislahaavus*. He experiences the light of the mitzvah, and he knows that it is true that the ענני כבוד surrounded us. This is something that cannot be explained with words, but someone who experienced it knows that it's true."

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

### Similar to the *Beis HaMikdash*

There are several comparisons between the

succah and the laws of the Beis HaMikdash.

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

The Arizal teaches that the table in the succah should have four legs to resemble the Shulchan of the Beis HaMikdash that had four legs.

We quote this not necessarily that people should buy a table with four legs, but rather to indicate the holiness of the succah, which resembles the Beis HaMikdash.

Chazal had a הו"א אמינא, a thought, that a succah must be built on the Har HaBayis, alongside the Beis HaMikdash. Chazal afterward disprove that theory. Nevertheless, a הו"א אמינא, an initial thought of Chazal, also has significance, and it shows

us a drop of the holiness of the succah. It is like a Beis HaMikdash built on the Har HaBayis. As we explained above, Hashem dwells in a succah, so it indeed resembles the Beis HaMikdash.

### The Four *Minim*

The Beis Yosef (651) writes the following story:

"In a dream, the Rikanti saw Rabbeinu Yitzchak Ashkenazi writing Hashem's holy 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 hold the *esrog* apart from the *lulav*. Then he understood the meaning of the dream. He told Reb Yitzchak Ashkanazi that the four *minim* represent the four letters of Hashem's name, with the *esrog* representing 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* that represent the four letters of Hashem's name הויה. Thus, they are together, but with a small space between the letters.

The Midrash (quoted in *Ramban Vayikra* 23:40) states: "The *esrog* is Hakadosh Baruch Hu, as it states... The *lulav* is Hakadosh Baruch Hu as it states... *Hadassim* are Hakadosh Baruch Hu... The *aravos* are Hakadosh Baruch Hu..." The Midrash quotes *pesukim* to prove the connection. This 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, "Hashem is with me, I am not afraid." He teaches, ה' לי, "Since Hashem is in my hands [as I hold the four *minim*] לא אירא, I have nothing to fear," because Hashem will provide all my needs and whatever I request.

Reb Shimon Deitsh *zt'l* (*Imrei Shefer*) writes, "My teacher, the Chasam Sofer *zt'l*, would hold the four *minim* throughout the entire *tefillah*. He said that he loves the mitzvah, and therefore, holding them helps him daven with greater *kavanah*. He 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* also 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. 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 chiyus and vigor.

### ***Esrog***

Tzaddikim said that if people appreciated the value of an *esrog*, they would spend all their money to acquire it.

Chazal say, "If Yidden aren't prophets, they are minor prophets (בני נביאים)" because, throughout the

generations, Yidden understood the *esrog*'s value and spent a lot of money to buy one.

This custom of spending money for an *esrog* goes back to the times of Chazal. 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."

*Esrogim* don't grow in Eastern Europe; they had to be imported from Italy or other countries. Thus, historically, there were only one or two *esrogim* per community, and they were very expensive. The Jewish community would save up money for this purchase, sometimes months in advance. And they did so with joy, for they wanted to keep this precious mitzvah.

Once, the Vilna Gaon *zt'l* gave his students a lot of money to buy an *esrog*, but the students couldn't find one. At last, they found

someone who had an *esrog*. This person wasn't a merchant, and he wanted the *esrog* for himself. The students offered him a lot of money, but he refused to part with his *esrog*.

When they explained to him that they needed it for the Vilna Gaon, he agreed to sell it, but only on condition that he will earn the reward for the mitzvah. The students feared that the Vilna Gaon wouldn't be happy with this condition, but nevertheless, out of desperation, they agreed to the deal.

When the Vilna Gaon heard about the condition, he was extremely happy. He said that now he can perform the mitzvah entirely *leshmah*.

Reb Yonasan Eibshitz's *zt'l* would also spend a lot of money to purchase a beautiful *esrog*. Reb Hirsch of Hessin *zt'l*, a talmid of his, testified that Reb Yonasan Eibshitz *zt'l* would buy an *esrog*, and if he

found a more beautiful one at a later time, he would buy that one too. And then, if he found a more beautiful *esrog*, he would buy that one, too. His *succah* was also decorated with costly items. His student wrote, "All the money of his house held no value in his eyes when it came to loving Hashem and His mitzvos."

There are different versions to the following story, and I will write it as I heard it:

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev *zt'l* was very poor, and sometimes, there wasn't even food in his home. But he did own one valuable item. That was the tefillin of Reb Michel's holy father: Reb Yitzchak of Derohovitz *zt'l*.

Reb Michel's Rebbetzin *zt'l* pleaded many times that he sell the tefillin so they could support their family, but Reb Michel refused. He didn't want to part from his precious tefillin. Once, a wealthy

person came to Zlotchev and offered a lot of money for the tefillin, but Rebbe Michel turned him down. His father's tefillin weren't for sale.

One year, there were hardly any esrogim in Eastern Europe. An esrog merchant came to Zlotchev with an esrog, but he was asking for an exorbitant sum. "What will be?" Reb Michel thought. "Could it be that this year we won't keep this precious mitzvah?"

He 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*. Reb Michel didn't respond, but when she asked again, he was forced to tell her that he sold the tefillin. She bit into the *esrog*, and she said, "How many times did I ask you to sell the *esrog* for

our family, but you didn't want to. And now you sold it for a mitzvah!?"

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

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

In one town, everyone chipped in to buy an *esrog*; each person gave according to his ability. But there was one wealthy person who refused to contribute.

Without this wealthy man's help, it took a long time for the community to gather enough money for the *esrog*. The *esrog*

merchant saw that they were slow in coming up with the money, and he warned them that if they don't pay the full price, he will take the esrog elsewhere.

The wealthy rosh hakahal paid the difference, and they managed to buy the esrog without the miser's help.

Of course, everyone was angry with the miser, and particularly, the rosh hakahal. "He should have given his share," everyone was saying.

The four minim were held in the rosh hakahal's home because he paid the lion's share of the cost for the esrog. Yom tov morning, the townspeople lined up in front of the rosh hakahal's home to have their turn to shake the four minim. The wealthy miser was also in the line. When it was his turn, the rosh hakahal didn't give him the four minim. "Because of you, we almost didn't

have this mitzvah. I won't give it to you. You don't deserve it."

The wealthy miser had no choice but to leave.

Later that morning, the rosh hakahal walked to the beis midrash to daven shacharis and shake the four minim by Hallel. The wealthy miser ran over to the rosh hakahal, shouted the brachos על נטילת לולב ושהחיינו, and he lifted the rosh hakahal, and shook him in all six directions. His desire to perform this mitzvah was so great that this was the closest way possible to achieve the mitzvah. The rav of the community witnessed this episode, and he told the *rosh hakahal* to allow the wealthy man to hold the *esrog* and *lulav* in his hands.

When the miser died, his deeds were weighed in heaven, and the scale tipped to the side of sin. One *malach* asked, "Did you place the merit of the

four minim that he took 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 tipped to the side of sin."

The *malach* said, "But you should also put on the scale the weight of the *rosh hakahal*, because he lifted him to perform the mitzvah."

The *rosh hakahal*'s weight was added to the scale, and it tipped to the side of virtue, thus granting him entry to Gan Eden.

בדרך צחות, the Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* explained what we can gain by spending a lot of money to buy the four *minim*:

During the judgment of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Satan announces 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 do they listen to me?" The Satan replies. "They are a wise nation, and they should have ignored my temptations."

"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 pay a lot of money for an esrog, a citrus fruit, with a retail value of a few cents. The malachim say, "You see, they are easily tricked." And with this claim, their sins are forgiven, and they are signed for a good year.

The Berdichiver Rav *zt'l* said that he once saw the Satan, and he noticed that the Satan was very sad. "What's the matter?" the Berdichever Rav asked him. "Why are you so sad?"

The Satan replied, "A shipload of *esrogim* is arriving, and 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 happy?" the Rav asked.

The Satan replied, "The ship with the *esrogim* sank."

Chol HaMoed Succos, the Satan was sad again. The Rav asked him about that." 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 found a way to buy *esrogim* for a very high price, and they were delighted with the mitzvah. The desire, the price, plus the joy were very precious before Hashem, even more

precious than had all the *esrogim* arrived."

### ישמחת בחגך - *Simchah*

The Vilna Gaon zt'l, the Pele Yoetz (*Kibud Av v'Em*), and other *miforshim* express how each mitzvah has its *mazal*, some mitzvos are kept carefully while people are lax with others.

For example, people are very cautious with *succah* and the four *minim*. They study the *halachos*, they keep the mitzvos with all their heart and soul. If they err with these mitzvos, their hearts are full of remorse.

But there is another mitzvah on Succos, which is also a mitzvah from the Torah and perhaps equally important, only it doesn't share the same good *mazal*. We are referring to the mitzvah to be happy on succos. As it states *ישמחת בשמחה בחגך... והיית אך שמחה*. Many people aren't so careful to keep this obligation. Partially, this is because

people consider happiness on yom tov as a recommendation or something enjoyable, and not as an actual obligation.

But being happy on Succos is an obligation. As the Rambam writes "There is a mitzvah to be happy on all holidays, but there is a specific commandment to be happy on Succos, as it states [about Succos], ושמחת, "rejoice before Hashem your G-d seven days" (*VaYikra* 23).

And your joy should spill over to your wife, children, and to others around you. As it states (*Devarim* 16: 14 - 15) ושמחת בהגיד אתה ובנך ובתך... והיתום והאלמנה אשר בקרבך והיית אך שמח "Be happy on your holiday, you, your son and daughter...the orphan, the widow that lives among you, and you shall be very happy."

And it states in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 529:2): "A person is obligated to be happy and in a good mood on Yom Tov: him, his wife

and children, and everyone who is associated with him (וכל הנלוים עליו). How does he make his family happy? By giving nuts and roasted grains to the children [or in today's world, give them candy and other special foods that children enjoy]. For women, buy them clothing and jewelry according to your abilities."

In Yerushalayim, there was a jewelry store next door to a shop that sold esrogim and lulavim. A scholar went into the jewelry store, and a simple person went into the four minim shop. They met outside the stores, each carrying their purchases in their hands. 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 I purchased a mitzvah *de'oraysa*. Because there is a mitzvah from the

Torah to make the family happy on yom tov.

From the Torah, the mitzvah of lulav is only an obligation on the first day of Succos, but the mitzvah to be happy on Succos is for all seven days. The Imrei Noam zt'l says that this is to tell us that Hashem loves it when His nation is happy and in good spirits. Therefore, He made this mitzvah for seven days.

We don't know how to measure the mitzvos, but what we must know is that being happy on Succos isn't merely a good idea, a chassidic concept, and the like. It's an obligation from the Torah.

### **Tips for *Simchah***

A person's default nature is to feel down and to focus on the negative. This is one of the reasons that we aren't so cautious with the mitzvah of being happy on yom tov. We think the mitzvah is too hard to keep.

Here are some suggestions that will help us attain simchah.

The Tzemech Tzedek (Lubavitz) zt'l said that one should daven for *simchah*. As Dovid HaMelech davened (*Tehillim* 86:4) שְׂמַח נַפְשׁ עַבְדְּךָ "Gladden your servant's soul." That will certainly help.

Another piece of advice for simchah is to believe that everything that happens to us is from Hashem. So why should we be upset? Everything is exactly as it should be, and for our good.

Someone came to Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt'l, bemoaning his plights in life. Reb Shlomo Zalman told him, "I know a Yid who had an operation, and ever since then, he is deaf in one ear. He is also a widower, r'l. Three of his children never bore children. Despite all his troubles, he is always happy, and he always has a smile on his face."

The man said, "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 told him that he was speaking about himself.

Because when one knows that everything is planned by Hashem, he is always happy.

It says (Shemos 18:19) ויחד יתרו, "Yisro was happy."

We quote Rashi's commentary on ויחד יתרו, and we will translate it according to remez, hints:

וישמח יתרו, Yisro was happy.

וזהו פשוטו, he was happy because he had emunah peshutah that everything was for his good.

ומדרש אגדה, however those who are constantly questioning Hashem's ways, נעשה בשרו חדודין חדודין, he feels like his flesh is pierced all over because he doesn't have the emunah that it is all for the good.

The Alter of Slobadka *zt'l* said: When the Rambam leaves out a halachah from his sefer, scholars are certain that it wasn't an oversight or accident. On the contrary, they are convinced that the Rambam left it out intentionally, and they study the subject in-depth to understand why this halachah was omitted. So when something is missing in your life – be it *parnassah*, or any other matter – why don't you also believe that it was done purposely, for a reason?<sup>9</sup>

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9. A Holocaust survivor was complaining talking against Hashem *r"l* in front of the Chazon Ish. The survivor couldn't make peace with the tragedies he witnessed. The Chazon Ish showed him a Tosfes and asked him to explain it. The man was unable to.

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

The pasuk says that the fools don't understand Hashem's ways. But behold, also the wise and intelligent aren't able to comprehend Hashem's ways!

We can answer that the pasuk should be read like this: מה גדלו מעשיך ה' "How great are Your ways, Hashem... איש בער לא ידע את זאת, the fool, however, doesn't know that Hashem's ways are deep. He thinks everything should be logical. And when it isn't,

he asks questions on Hashem.

That is the approach of the fools. However, the wise know that their minds are weak, and they can't understand everything. When something happens to them that doesn't make sense to them, they don't question Hashem. They believe it is just and for their best.

So, the pasuk is saying מואד עמקו מחשבותיך Hashem's thoughts are so deep, we can't fathom them. וכסיל לא יבין את זאת but the fool isn't aware of the depths of Hashem's thoughts, and he thinks everything should be logical to him.<sup>10</sup>

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The Chazon Ish rebuked him, "If you can't understand a few lines of Tosfos, how do you expect to understand Hashem's ways?"

**10.** We make the *brachah* on the *esrog* מיטן פיטום אראפ, with the *pitom* facing down. The words מיטן פיטום אראפ is also an expression which people use when things are spiraling downwards and nothing works out. But we make a *brachah* when it is מיטן פיטום אראפ, because we believe that although we don't understand, everything is good.

## Bitachon

Bitachon is another primary attribute for attaining happiness. People with bitachon are happy, without worries. This is because they are confident that Hashem will take care of all their needs.

It states (Yirmiyahu 17:7), ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח בה' והיה, and Chazal tell us והיה means happiness. Because some people talk about bitachon, and they say to others, "Why do you worry? Hashem will help." But when *they* have a problem, they are worried and distressed. This proves that they don't have bitachon. However, והיה, when one is happy always, even when worries arise, about him we can say ברוך הגבר אשר יבטח בה', "Blessed is the person who trusts in Hashem."

## Reasons for Happiness on Succos

In addition to the actual *mitzvah*, there are many

reasons to be happy on Succos.

The Sfas Emes (תרמ"ג ד"ה) ז"ל writes, "The Jewish nation became pure from sin on Yom Kippur, and 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 the day the Mishkan was built]. Also, in every generation, Hashem is happiest on Succos, for then Bnei Yisrael are clean from all sins. The succos we dwell in is our sign that we attained this purity."

The Shlah (סוכה נר מצודה סוף) 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 holiday. In *Hilchos Lulav* (8:15) the Rambam writes, "The joy that one has when he performs mitzvos...is a great service. Whoever refrains deserves to be punished."

### Benefits Earned from *Simchah*

When we are happy Succos, we will be happy the entire year. Rebbe Mordechai of Chernobyl *zy'a* said that Succos is called *זמן שמחתנו* and another translation of *זמן* is to prepare. On Succos, we prepare and store up *simchah* for the entire year.

The Abarbanel teaches this lesson from the words,

ושמחת בחגך... והיית אך שמח. He writes, "The *pasuk* is giving us a guarantee: If you are happy Succos, you will be joyous the entire year."<sup>11</sup>

At the beginning of the year, we make *simanim* to be *zoche* to a good year. The Pele Yoetz *zt'l* says that joy on Succos creates a good *siman* for the upcoming year. He writes, "We are commanded to be happy, שמחה של מצוה, and this becomes a good omen 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>12</sup>

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11. See also the Ibn Ezra on the *pasuk* *ושמחת בחגך* (*Devarim* 16: 14-16). He explains that if we are happy on Succos, we are blessed to be happy always.

12. About Yom Kippur it states (*Vayikra* 23:27) *אך בעשר לחודש השביעי יום הכיפורים הוא...*. 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 Chozeh of Lublin zt'l was at a chasunah, fulfilling the mitzvah of שמחת חתן וכלה, and someone asked him, "Why are you taking part in this mitzvah, and what is its purpose? No one is as happy as a chasan and kalah. Wouldn't it be better to use this time to bring joy to people who are going through difficult 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 chasunah. But the chasan and kalah are worried and concerned: How can they guarantee that they will remain pure, without sin, for the rest of their lives? What will be in the future? So, we dance

before them, and we make them happy. This tells them, "If you want to remain pure from sin your entire life, our message is: Be happy. Your joy will protect you from falling into sin."

Similarly, 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 joy.

Aveiros are associated with being sad. As it states by the egel (Shemos 23:4) ויהאבלו, "they mourned." And after Adam and Chavah's sin, it states (Breishis 3:16-17) ... בעצב תלדי בנים... "You will give birth with atzvus... You will earn your parnassah

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The Meshech Chachmah (א"ח) explains that אף can be translated as "even so..." If one didn't do teshuvah, perhaps he shouldn't fast on Yom Kippur. So, the Torah tells us אף, even so he must fast. On Succos we celebrate the atonement. But if we didn't do teshuvah, and we didn't achieve atonement, perhaps we shouldn't keep Succos? Again, the Torah writes ,אף, that even so, we should keep succos.

with atzvus." Because aveiros are about sadness, and joy is a protection from sin.

Rashi (Bamidbar 29:18) writes that the 98 sheep sacrificed on Succos combat and annul the 98 curses written in parashas כי תבוא.

The Avnei Nezer zt'l explains that the curses are annulled specifically on Succos because of the joy of Succos. The explanation is as follows:

The Arizal says that the 98 klalos come because (Devarim 28:47) תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה, "you didn't serve Hashem with joy." Therefore, on Succos, when we serve Hashem with joy, this atones and annuls the 98 curses.

On the yomim tovim, Hashem opens up His treasuries of kindness and bounty for us. The Beis Aharon (p.156.) explains that "On the yomim nora'im, [the treasuries of] bounty open up for us with

our fear, and on Succos they open with our joy."

### The Proper Joy

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

The Rambam (*Hilchos Lulav* 8:14) writes, "[The dancing at the *simchas beis hashoavah*] wasn't performed by *amei ha'aretz* or just by anyone else who wanted to dance. Only the *gedolim*, *chachmei Yisrael*, and the *roshei yeshivos*, the heads of Sanhedrin, chassidim, elders, and *anshei ma'aseh* danced. 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 see and to 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 it shouldn't turn into הוללות, levity.

The Sfas Emes explains that *אך והיית אך שמח*, means limited (מיעוט). We only want the true joy on yom tov, and we exclude the improper joy.<sup>13</sup>

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

### ***Emunah***

The Chidushei HaRim taught that when one sits in the *succah* he can merit attaining clear *emunah*. Because it states, בסוכות תשבו, "Live in

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

Or, it can be explained this way: *אך* is מיעוט, implying to a small amount of joy that is also an accomplishment.

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

succos for seven days... so you will *know*..."

Therefore, when we sit in the *succah*, it's an ideal time לידעת, to think about *emunah*, to 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, "A chuppah is outside, under the sky, to remind the *chassan* and *kallah* to turn to Heaven for all their needs. They shouldn't trust their parents, their in-laws, or anyone else for *parnassah*. Instead, they should look up to heaven and rely on Hashem alone.

"This is also the reason a *succah* is outdoors. Seeing the sky through the *schach* helps us remember to trust in Hashem."<sup>14</sup>

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 3) says that in the future, the nations of the world will beg Hashem to give them another chance to keep the mitzvos so they can earn Olam HaBa. Hashem will tell them to sit in *succos*. They all build their *succos* on their roofs. But then Hashem will send out a scorching sun, and all the nations of the world will kick their *succos* and leave. Thereby losing their portion in Olam HaBa.

### Luxuries

We are living in an era of financial blessings. Many Yidden can build beautiful, luxurious homes. On Succos, we are reminded that we can live just fine with less, too. For seven days, we leave our comfortable homes and spend a week in the *succah*,

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14. The Yerushalmi (*Succah* 2:3) teaches that *lechatichilah* one should be able to see the stars through the *s'chach*. This can be so he can see the heaven and remember to trust in Hashem.

and we realize that nothing is lacking.

Instead, we learn to focus on what is truly important in life.

It states, *וה' ברך את אברהם בכל*, "Hashem blessed Avraham with everything." The Midrash states that *בכל*, "everything" refers to the mitzvah of *succah*.

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

The Chozeh of Lublin (*Avnei Zikoron* 662) *zt'l* explains, *succah* is our reminder that luxuries aren't as essential as people make them be. When we know that, we have *הכל*, everything because even if one has little, he feels he has everything he needs.

Some people live in beautiful mansions, but are they happier than those who live in tiny houses? Not necessarily. More important than the size and decor of the home are the

vibes of peace and love that permeate the home.

Some people go on long, exotic vacations, but are they leading a better life than those who never go on vacation because they can't afford it? Chazal tell us that the truly wealthy people are those who are happy with their portion.

If you aren't happy with your portion, you can travel the entire world and still be miserable.

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

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya explains:

"This *pasuk* is teaching us Avraham's good *middos*. He left this world feeling fulfilled. He didn't need more. As it is also stated about Dovid HaMelech (*Tehillim* 21:3), *תאות לבו נתתה לו*, Dovid received all his desires, and he didn't want more. This is unlike most people, as it states (*Koheles*

5:9), אודהב 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 his yearnings. If he has a hundred, he wants two hundred. If he has two hundred, he wants four hundred.'<sup>15</sup> But Avraham was זקן ושבוע ימים "old and satisfied." He didn't lack anything. He was satisfied and happy with what he had. Because, as we explained, Hashem blessed Avraham with בכל, the mitzvah of succah, which is the awareness that luxuries aren't essential for attaining happiness.

Rebbe Yonoson Eibshitz (6:1) teaches that living with less is ideal. Those who don't have luxuries lead better lives. He writes, "The one who fears Hashem won't only have *succos* during the holiday of Succos. Throughout the entire year, he will remember that life is temporary, and he is a guest in this world. One should sleep in the shade of the *succah* and leave his permanent home. He shouldn't build expensive houses decorated with gems and diamonds just for pleasure. This will lead him to desire more money, to sin (such as to steal so he can fill his fortresses), and it

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**15.** This Midrash is difficult to understand because it states that a person never acquires even half his desires, and then it states that if he has a hundred, he desires two hundred. So, it seems that a person does achieve half of his desires.

We can answer that when someone has a hundred dollars, he thinks: "How can I be happy with my lot? If I will have two hundred, then I will be satisfied." Now 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.

causes him to be proud and to forget Hashem who created him. Remember Yundav ben Rechev's precious, ethical will (*Yirmiyahu* 35:6), for he told his children that they shouldn't live in houses. They should only live in tents, temporary dwelling place, one day living here and the next day somewhere else. This is what our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov did. They dwelled in tents. This gave them long life because they weren't afraid a fire might burn their castles down, and they weren't

fearful of enemies, hunger, or plague since they could quickly undo the strings of their tents and travel to a different country.<sup>16</sup>

"When Bilaam saw the Jewish nation dwelling in tents he said, *מה טובו אהליך*, 'How good are your tents...' He was referring to their tents, specifically, because we are people who dwell in tents... and then it will be good for us in this world and the next world. But when we build houses made from lime and stone, the stones will shout out all the sins: theft, pride,

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

The Yaaras Dvash also proves this from the Mishkan, which was made from *יריעות*, skins and woven cloth, and the Mishkan lasted for 480 years (counting the years the Mishkan stood in the desert and later in Eretz Yisrael, until its 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.

temptation, desires... This is the lesson of the *pasuk* בסוכות תשבו שבעת ימים (Vayikra 23:42).” Dwell in the temporary *succos* for seven days and discover that you can live with less.

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, ישוב, he 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 on the walls of his home; he will trust Hashem, alone."<sup>17</sup>

### Hoshanah Rabbah

As its name implies, many salvations emanate from this holy day. After one's demise, the court in heaven asks 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 wait and look forward to Hoshana Rabba, the day Hashem bestows salvations?

If you would know that seven days from now, for example, someone will give you a fortune of money, wouldn't you look

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17. The *Sfas Emes* (5645) writes, "The mitzvah of *succah* is the mitzvah of *bitachon*. As Chazal say, צא מדידת קבע, 'Leave your permanent dwelling...'. 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).

forward to that day? And if in seven days you or your child will get the shidduch you were waiting for, or the refuah you needed, or the success you hoped for, etc., wouldn't you look forward to that day? That is how we should look forward to Hoshanah Rabba, the day Hashem gives His salvation to His nation.

Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, Yom Kippur, and many days of Succos passed, and we prayed on these holy days for a good year. We might feel that we davened enough and that we don't need to pray so much on Hashana Rabba for a good year. But we didn't finish the process yet; we are still in the midst of the process. Hoshanah Rabba is a critical day to earn a good year.

The Divrei Yoel of Satmar *zt'l* would daven for a very long time on Hashanah Rabbah. Once, Hashanah Rabbah was on

a Friday, and it was almost Shabbos, and they were still in the middle of the *tefillos*. The *gaba'im* of his beis medrash announced that the women should go home to light Shabbos candles.

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

A city sinned against the king, and the court ruled that they would all be killed. The people of the city sought counsel. They were told that on a specific day, the king passes through a particular garden. They will go there on that day and plead before the king and beg him for forgiveness.

The city elders went to that garden on the designated date, and they waited for the moment that the king will come, but one hour passed, and then another, and they still didn't see the king.

The day was almost over. They were ready to give up. But one wise man said, "It is customary that the kings of this country pass through this garden on this day. Therefore, the king is certainly here. It must be that he is wearing regular clothes, and that's why we don't recognize him. But he's definitely here. So, let's call out to the king and request that he saves us. He will surely hear us, and he will forgive."

The Satmar Rebbe said, "Soon, the day will pass. We think the King isn't here, but we know that Hoshana Rabba Hakadosh Baruch Hu is here, waiting for our prayers. 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."

The Gemara calls Hoshanah Rabbah "Yom Aravah" the day when we take the *aravah*, but there is no mention that it is a day of judgment. Similarly, many ancient sefarim don't mention that it is a day of judgment.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* explained that in the early generations, the fear of judgment was so great, if people 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 בהגיד. In later generations (and in our age), the fear isn't as great, and therefore, the *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, do

teshuvah, and give *tzedakah* to annul all harsh decrees.<sup>18</sup>

Hoshanah Rabbah is the *yahrtzeit* of Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Tchortkov *zt'l*.

He would say that Hoshanah **Rabbah** is named after the '*Amen yehei shmei rabbah*.' Chazal say, "Whoever answers *Amen yehei shmei rabba* with all his might, his [negative] judgment is ripped up."

Reb Yochanan says, "Even if one has the sin of *avodah zorah*, he is forgiven" (*Shabbos* 119).

Hashanah Rabba, therefore, means that our salvations come because we say *amen yehei shmei rabba*.

During World War II, the Yidden of Yerushalayim made a *kabalah* to improve their *Amen yehei shmei rabba*. They began saying it

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**18.** Reb Shlomo Zalman adds that there is one indication to the judgment of Hoshanah Rabbah in the Gemara and early *sefarim*. Because Chazal say, בהג גידונים על המים, "Succos we are judged for rain [how much it will rain that year]," and the Levush writes, "Therefore, people light more candles in the beis medresh on Hoshanah Rabbah, similar to Yom Kippur, because it is the final day 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 countries 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 a tragedy 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 arouse people to *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah* anymore, therefore the *sefarim* tell us more details of the awesome judgment of this day.

with all their might and with *kavanah* to mitigate the destruction. When the Nazi general, Romel *ym's*, was in Mitzrayim intending to come to Eretz Yisrael, Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiler *zt'l* said to his *gabai*, "I sense that the *resha'im* won't succeed to conquer Eretz Yisrael because the Yidden improved on how they say *Amen yehei shmei rabba*." And that's what occurred.

### Bring the *Succah* to the Home

On Shemini Atzeres, in the afternoon, we gezenen (say goodbye) from the succah. There's a tefillah that some say at this time (...רבונא דעלמא, printed in many siddurim and machzorim). In this prayer, we say, "It shall be your will that the malachim that are associated with the succah and the four minim... should come with us...into our homes..."

In the *piyut* of Shemini Atzeres (מערבית לשמו"ע) it

states, פונים מסוכה לביתם לישב צקון, לחשם הקשב, "For 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 should remain with the lessons and with the kedushah of the succah throughout the year. The prayer is implying that Hashem should listen to the prayers of those who take the holy atmosphere of succah, with all its lessons, and they take it with them and bring them into their homes.

Chazal take note that the words בסוכות תשבו are a contradiction. סוכות connotes

a temporary dwelling place and תשבו is a home where one lives permanently. Therefore, Chazal says that the pasuk is telling us that we should live in the succah permanently. In Chazal's words, תשבו כעין תדורו, live in the succah as you live in the home.

The Satmar Rebbe zt'l (Dvarei Yoel) zt'l teaches

There is a concept אין הקש אין 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 as we live in the home, and it tells us to live in the home as we lived in the succah. People have uplifted thoughts in the succah, and he should bring this inspiration with him into the home, as well.

The Gemara (*Avodah Zorah* 3) refers to *succah* as a מצוה קלה, a light and easy mitzvah. In (*Gittin* 56) there's an expression for a simple

insect, בריה קלה. The Gemara explains that the insect is called קלה because it eats, but it doesn't have a bowel movement.

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

In the Yom Tov *tefillah* we say, והנחילנו ה' אלקינו...מועדי, קדשיך, "Hashem gave us as an inheritance...the holy *yomim tovim*..." An inheritance, the Sfas Emes said, is something that remains forever. It isn't something that leaves after a few days pass. So too, the holidays should always remain with us, even after the holiday is over.

A chassid of the Beis Aharon of Karlin zt'l returned home after spending a *yom tov* together with his Rebbe. People

asked him, ווי אזוי איז אריבער די יום טוב, "How did the *yom tov* pass?"

The chassid replied, די יו"ט איז נישט אריבער. די יו"ט איז אריין, "The *yom tov* didn't pass by. It came in." 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 same 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. 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 it can pertain to this topic as well:

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 good qualities..."

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

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

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 of people.

She was too far away from her father to complain, so she suffered in silence.

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 take the long trip to visit you." The king wrote them the date he expected to arrive.

The husband realized that he needed to make some quick changes. He hired many 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. He didn't want the king to see that there was a problem between them.

The king was with them for some time, and he was delighted with what he saw. He believed he chose

the correct partner 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. She called her father to a private room, and amidst tears, she told him that her husband isn't the son of a king, and that he acts cruelly to her.

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

But then we daven *Ne'ilah*, and the King is about to leave. The Yid cries to Hashem and says, "I suffer so much from my

body. When You came to visit, the body acted nicely with me, because it didn't want You to know what is really happening. But now that You're about to leave, I must tell You that the body is cruel to me, and it 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 act properly with you at all times."

The *nimshal* is, by *Ne'ilah*, when we cry that we don't want to be with the physical body, throughout the year, 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. And in My presence, the *guf* will not disturb you from serving Hashem."

### **Shemini Atzeres - Simchas Torah**

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

Some opinions say Shemini Atzeres isn't called חג (see *Shulchan Aruch* 668). The Rema MiPano explains that חג means a circle. All holidays are like a circle, going around a primary point. The primary point, he says, is Shemini Atzeres. Therefore, Shmini Atzeres isn't a חג.<sup>19</sup>

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19. The Sfas Emes says the *s'chach* of the *succah* resembles a

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

The Chasam Sofer *zy'a* teaches that Shemini Atzeres is greater than Yom Kippur because Yom Kippur is to love Hashem through afflictions (such as fasting, not washing, etc.) and on Shemini Atzeres we love Hashem through joy, which is a much greater connection. As it states (*Shir*

*HaShirim* 7:7) מה יפת ומה נעמית אהבה בתענוגים, "How beautiful it is when the love is with pleasure and joy."<sup>20</sup>

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

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wedding chuppah. After the chuppah, comes *yichud*, an even greater unity. That is Shemini Atzeres.

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

**20.** The *Chinuch* (324) writes that we don't take the four *minim* on Shmini Atzeres because the four *minim* are to remind us to direct our joy (of the gathering of the crops) to Hashem. Shmini 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 any reminders to focus our hearts toward Hashem.

he asks will be given to him."

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*."

Shemini Atzeres, Simchas Torah, is also a day for receiving Hashem's bounty.

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 up all his treasures for him and doesn't withhold anything.

Similarly, Hashem bestows on us immense goodness..."

The Kotzker *zt'l* said that Shemini Atzeres is the time of the *gzar din* (the decree) for *parnassah*. His son, Rebbe Dovid *zt'l*, used to daven *beyichidus* (by himself). On Shemini Atzeres, the Kotzker called for him and he told him that on this day it is important to daven with a *minyan*, because it is decreed how much *parnassah* he will have this year. The hint is in the *pasuk* וְהָיְתָה אֵךְ שְׂמֵחָה, which the Gemara says refers to Shemini Atzeres, and the final letters spell חֵת"ךְ, the name of the *malach* appointed over *parnassah*.<sup>21</sup>

We read וּזְמַת הַבְּרָכָה, the *brachos* Moshe gave Bnei Yisrael, and as we read them, we receive those *brachos* again. Rebbe Henoah of Alexander *zt'l*

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

said that this is the reason there isn't birchas kohanim Simchas Torah. We are receiving Moshe Rabbeinu's brachos, and we don't need any other brachos.

### Dancing with the Torah

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

The Shlomei Chagigah (p.292:, printed year תק"ג) writes, "On Simchas Torah, fortunate are those who are happy 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 be studying the Torah. There was a rav who used to be very happy on Simchas Torah, and for three generations, his

descendants were renowned scholars, one after the other. 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 prestige and rabbinic position, he would jump and dance before the Torah, and he roused others to do the same. He would tell them שמחו בה' וגילו צדיקים והרנינו כל ישרי לב, 'Rejoice with Hashem and be happy tzadikim...'"

The Shaar HaKavonos from Reb Chaim Vital zt'l states, "My teacher (the Arizal) went around the bimah... and he danced and he sang with all his strength. On motzei yom tov, he went to several batei midrashim to dance with the Torah (called in Eretz Yisrael שניית הקפה), and he did this for 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 he would clap and dance with all his strength before the Torah."

People were amazed by how much effort and strength the Satmar Rebbe zt'l put into his dancing on Simchas Torah, although he was a weak man. When they asked him about this, he replied, "Chazal (Succah 48.) say, שמיני עצרת רגל בפני עצמה, היא." He was saying that on Shemini Atzeres everyone gets another *רגל* to help him dance.<sup>22</sup>

Dancing with the Torah on Simchas Torah is also *mesugal* for bearing children. The Yismach Yisrael zt'l learns this from Michal, Dovid HaMelech's wife, who was disgusted with Dovid when she saw him dancing with all his might before the aron (see Shmuel 2, 16:23). She was punished that she couldn't bear a child. We understand

that if one is happy with the Torah, he will be rewarded with children.

Someone from our *chaburah* didn't have children, and on one *simchas Torah*, he danced with all his might. He put aside his honor, and he honored the Torah. Nine months later, he bore his first child. The next *Simchas Torah*, he did the same, and he had another child nine months later. A friend of his heard about this, and he wanted to do the same. So, he went to an old-age home, a place where no one knew him, and he wouldn't be embarrassed to dance with all his might. He danced and honored the Torah immensely, and nine months afterward he bore his first child.

The Chida wrote a prayer that some say before the *hakafos*. This prayer

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**22.** The literal meaning of the Gemara is that it is that Shemini Atzeres is its own holiday, and it isn't part of Succos.

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 limb, similar to the highest prayer which is כל עצמותי, with all one's essence and all one's limbs."

The Ateres Yehoshua (ד"ה במאמרם) explains the Mishnah (Negaim 12:1) ביה עגול אינו מטמא בנגעים, that due to the עגולים, dances that we do on Simchas Torah, all plagues and all troubles go away.

The Riyatz 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 in these days we can draw buckets of spiritual and material bounty. We acquire these by dancing."