

# The Torah AnyTimes

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## Rabbi Asher Weiss

### The World of the Sukkah

As we transition from the holiday of Yom Kippur to the holiday of Sukkos, many works of Chassidus and Musar and beginning with our Sages have sought to underscore the connection and tie between these two holidays.

Beginning with days of fear and awe, we move into days of joy and happiness. Years ago, I remember how the Klausenberger Rebbe zt"l married off his youngest daughter. At the Sheva Berachos, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l attended. The Klausenberger Rebbe requested that Rav Yaakov say some words at the special occasion, upon which Rav Yaakov said the following.

A Chassan on the day of his wedding is forgiven for all of his sins (Yerushalmi Bikkurim 3:3; Rema, Even Ha'Ezer 61:1). The same is true for the Kallah. But why is this so? What did the Chassan and Kallah do to deserve that their sins be wiped away?

Rav Yaakov explained that, in truth, the Chassan did not do anything to deserve this remarkable zechus (merit). However, it is necessary that this take place. Since the Chassan wants to be in a state of simcha in order to make his newlywed wife happy, it is necessary that his sins be forgiven, for otherwise the weight of him carrying the filth of his sins will reduce his joy and decrease his ability to attain an uplifted spirit. Therefore, it is impera-

tive that he be forgiven of his sins so that he can obtain the proper frame of mind as he enters his new phase of married life.

The same is true when it comes to Sukkos. Why are we so joyous on Sukkos more than any other time of year? It is specifically now because we have been forgiven for our sins on Yom Kippur. We walk away from Yom Kippur entirely cleansed of all our sins, and what greater simcha could there be. What greater gift from Hashem can we imagine.

During the Yom Tov of Sukkos, we ask Hashem that just as we merit to sit in the Sukkah in this world, we should similarly merit to sit in the Sukkah of the Leviathan. The concept of the Sukkah of the Leviathan stems from the Gemara (Bava Bara 75a), where the Gemara tells us, "In the future, Hashem will make a Sukkah from the skin of the Leviathan for the righteous." The Gemara, however, doesn't draw the connection between the holiday of Sukkos and the Sukkah which will be made of the Leviathan. The relationship is echoed in the Yalkut Shimoni (Parshas Emor, 653): "Anyone who fulfills the mitzvah of Sukkah as required will merit to sit in the Sukkah of the skin of the Leviathan."

What is the exact nature of this relationship?

The Shitah Mekubetzes cites a remarkable idea from the Sefer Livnas Ha'Sapir from R' Dovid, the son of R' Yehudah Ha'Chassid: "The Levia-

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than is that which satisfies the righteous and connects them with their body and soul together, as we are taught in Tanna D’Vei Elyahu, ‘The righteous will be resurrected in the times of Tachiyas HaMeisim...’ The return of the soul to the body of those who are righteous will be done by the Leviathan, as the verse says, ‘Y’laveh ishi ei’lai—My husband will be connected to me’ (Bereishis 29:34).” While these words certainly reference Kabbalistic thought, the underpinning of this idea is that the Leviathan is that which bridges the gap between the physical and spiritual, the body and the soul.

The Vilna Gaon (Iyov, Ch.3) similarly writes: “The concept of the Leviathan is that of connection, as the verse coins the words, ‘L’vivas chein—An adornment of grace’ (Mishlei 1:9).

The source of the name Leviathan is thus either sourced to the words ‘Y’laveh ishi ei’lai’ or ‘L’vivas chein.’ However, in both phrases, the underlying theme is that of connection to Hashem (i.e. the ‘husband’ referenced by the Shitah Mekubetzes) or the bridging of body and soul.

After the days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which have been days of extraordinary spiritual elevation, we enter the days of Sukkos. The Sukkah represents the point of connection and fusion between the worlds of the soul and the body, and the center point where heaven and earth kiss—symbolic of the Beis Hamikdash which is described in the Gemara (Bava Basra 74a) as the place where heaven and earth kiss. The early Chassidim in fact described the mitzvah of Sukkah as one in which you fulfill with your boots on! We are instructed to dwell in the Sukkah as we dwell in our homes year-round and enter into it with our physical bodies, allowing it to envelop us on all sides.

We are commanded to leave our homes and enter the Sukkah, which

manifests and contains kedusha (holiness), similar to the Korban Chagigah (Sukkah 9a), upon which the sanctity of Hashem rested. It is therefore forbidden to derive personal benefit from the Sukkah in the same way that it is forbidden to derive personal benefit from a Korban. This is why the Gemara (Sukkah 28a) notes that we are to remove our nicest dishes and sheets from our homes and bring them into the Sukkah. Why, though, can’t we simply remove our rooftops from above our year-round homes and live right inside our homes! Why must we build a Sukkah outside and remove from our homes everything which we use during the year and make use of it in the Sukkah?

When a person dwells in the Sukkah with those same cups and dishes and mattresses and sheets that he makes use of in his house year-long and now they are in the Sukkah, they are no longer simple and mundane dishes and mattresses. They are holy and elevated dishes and mattresses by virtue of their presence in the Sukkah. This is the power of the Sukkah. In one’s homes, that which is physical retains its physical properties; here in the Sukkah, those very same physical items and components take on newly elevated spiritual dimensions.

Throughout the year, only wine would be poured on the Mizbeach (altar). Wine is the most supreme of all extracts from fruits, and is distinguished by being granted its own special blessing (al ha’gefen). On Sukkos, however, water is poured on the Mizbeach, because even that which is the simplest of all liquids in the eyes of Chazal—water (e.g. water cannot be purchased with Maaser Sheini money; Maasei Sheini 1:5) —is elevated to the pristine equivalent status of wine on Sukkos.

A Sukkah similarly contains within it the sanctity of the Beis Hamikdash.

Dovid Hamelech writes, “Then His Sukkah was in Jerusalem, and His dwelling in Zion” (Tehillim 76:3), which is described by the Rishonim as serving as a reference to the mitzvah of Sukkah. The Beis Hamikdash, however, was built from the finest of materials, in contrast to the Sukkah wherein the Schach is to be comprised of the remnants and dregs from the granary and wine vats. This is because on Sukkos, even the most basic and seemingly physically diminished products—the remnants of grain and wine and water—are raised to an elevated status.

After the auspicious days of Rosh Hashanah and Sukkos, the Sukkah fuses and sanctifies the physical and spiritual worlds into one, merging the body and soul. The physical world takes on spiritual properties. This is the hidden meaning of the Leviathan, described as that which merges the physical and spiritual dimensions. Therefore, “One who fulfills the mitzvah of Sukkah as required will merit to sit in the Sukkah of the skin of the Leviathan.”

The Leviathan illuminates the entire world, as the Gemara (Bava Basra 74b) recounts how R’ Eliezer and R’ Yehoshua were once traveling on a ship and R’ Eliezer dozed off. Suddenly, however, R’ Yehoshua shook in a sudden outburst, prompting R’ Eliezer to awaken and ask R’ Yehoshua what he saw. “I saw a great light,” R’ Yehoshua replied. “Perhaps you saw the eye of the Leviathan,” explained R’ Eliezer.

In the future, Hashem will place over the walls of Jerusalem the skin of the Leviathan and it will illuminate the entire world (Bava Basra 75a). Therefore, when a person sits in the Sukkah, he speaks about the future time when the Leviathan will be used in such a splendid way. May we merit that auspicious day and herald it in our time.

# Rabbi YY Jacobson

## Limbs of the Patriarchs

Archived in the records of the Royal Botanical Gardens, it is noted that there are an estimated 390,900 known and existent plants on earth today. Around 2,000 of them are edible, and around 200 of them are part of the world's commerce. 15 of them are main staples in the human diet.

But the One who knows not only all the names, but the genetic composition of each and every plant decided that from the 390,900 plants, there would be 4 to be embraced over the holiday of Sukkos. How many of us would know what a Hadas or Aravah or Esrog looks like if not for Sukkos? Why, though, were these chosen among all others?

The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 30:10) offers one interpretation among many. The four species of Sukkos refer to four individuals: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov and Yosef. Avraham relates to the Esrog, as Avraham entered into old age, reminiscent of the verse which emphasizes that we are to honor those who have reached the ripeness and beauty of old age. Yitzchak references the

Lulav, also known as Kapos Tam-arim (palm fronds from a date tree). The word Kapos—referencing that the branches of the Lulav need to be connected to the center spine of the Lulav—is cognate to the word Kafus, tied down, reminiscent of Yitzchak Avinu who was tied down at the Akeidah. Yaakov Avinu refers to the Hadas, for just as the Hadas is filled with leaves and covers the stem, so too Yaakov Avinu was blessed with an abundance of children. Yosef refers to the willow, which dries up quickly, just as Yosef passed away before his brothers.

What does the Midrash mean to teach us?

To understand this Midrash, let us examine another Midrash brought down just a few lines after the above.

The four species correspond to four parts of the body. The Esrog is similar to the heart; the Lulav is similar to the spine; the Hadas to the eye; and the Aravah to the shape of a mouth. The Midrash means to underscore that all parts of a person are intended to be subjugated to the service of Hashem and fulfillment of His will.

It could be that these two Midrashim are interconnected. It is not that we simply want to remember on Sukkos that we have a heart, spine, eye and mouth. We don't need the four species to remind us that we have these limbs. Nor do we need to have the four species to remind us about Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov or Yosef.

On Sukkos, rather, we need to ask ourselves if we have a heart. But who's heart? Avraham's heart. On Sukkos, we need to ask ourselves if we have a spine. But who's spine? Yitzchak's spine. On Sukkos, we need to ask ourselves if we have eyes. But who's eyes? Yaakov's eyes. On Sukkos, we need to ask ourselves if we have a mouth. But who's mouth? Yosef's mouth.

The four organs of the body and the Avos and Yosef are connected. We are striving to develop to the caliber of utmost sensitivity and wholesomeness, and with that we will have: Avraham's heart, Yitzchak's spine, Yaakov's eyes and Yosef's mouth. If we do that, we will truly be singing to Hashem with all the limbs of our body.

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# Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser

## The Star on Stage

Once received a call from a family who had made a trip into New York from Israel. They wanted to meet with me, I was told. I readily complied, sensing that their desire to visit was bordering on an emergency.

Shortly thereafter, in walked six people, none of them religious. I of-

fered them something to drink and a place to seat. They then informed me of their reason for the visit. Their daughter was in need a kidney transplant and the possibility to obtain a kidney in Israel was not forthcoming. In addition, they were in addition of funds. After taking down all

the relevant information I could, I told them to give me a call tomorrow and I would follow up.

But the next day came and I didn't received a call. Two days later, it was the same. No call. Three days later, I began to wonder what happened. If it was an emergency, wouldn't they

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get back in touch with me? But they hadn't. A week went by and I had still received no call. On the other hand, I didn't take down their number because I was certain that they would call me. But now, I was left waiting for them to reach out to me.

The following week, I received a call. It was the family. "Rabbi Goldwasser, would it be possible for us to come and see you again?" They gathered around my dining room table as they had done before. "Could I ask you a question," I began, looking to the father. "Why didn't you come back?" The father looked back at me, his face serious. "I saw that you were very religious, and I knew that you would not help us." I was taken aback. "So what made you come back now?" I followed up as my next question. "I called the same person back who had first recommended we talk with you, and he again advised me to speak with you. So here we are."

The girls at the local Bais Yaakov began to get to work on behalf of this girl who was in need of dialysis. She needed to travel from Marine Park to Bay Ridge—approximately a forty minute drive—and the girls arranged for a van with a long seat that would enable the girl to lay down and rest during the drive. The family was also provided with food every Shabbos along with candles and everything else needed to make it through their stay in the states. They were treated like royalty.

As time marched on, the family was in need of funding. I called up a good friend of mine and let him know of the situation. He lived in Israel and had been a rock star, though now he was a baal teshuva and entirely religious. "I need a big favor," I said. "Could you perform a concert? There is a very sick girl here." "I'm

coming," he said, without thinking twice. No charge.

We put together an advertisement, from which the proceeds would help raise funds for this girl. On the scheduled day of the concert, he came to pick me up in his car, and we headed to the hall. We arrived a few minutes later, drove toward the building, and then got out of the car, as he grabbed his guitar. When we finally made it to the side of the building, my friend placed his head against the outside brick wall and began shaking his head. "I'm not able to play tonight." "What do you mean?" I asked. Without saying another word, he picked up his guitar and began back heading to the car. I couldn't believe it. "You need to play!" I said. "As it is, the family didn't trust me; if this falls through, it won't be good. They'll never trust another religious Jew in their life." But he was adamant that he would not be playing tonight.

He proceeded to head inside the car and close the door. I began pleading with him, knocking on the car window. "Please, please, listen to me," I said. He slowly opened up the window and then told me. "Before I became religious, I played in this concert hall. It was a club, and I have memories that I do not want to remember. You'll have to excuse me, Rebbe, but I cannot play here."

I didn't know what to say, until Hashem gave me the words.

I remembered the Gemara (Yoma 86b) which tells us, "What does it mean to be a 'baal teshuva'? One who finds himself in the same place where they had sinned before, and they now stand in great strength and withstand the challenge." I went on to tell him exactly that. "This is why you are here this evening. 'You came to perform teshuva sheleimah.' He

then looked at me, his face taking in my words. "That's true? It really says that?" "I promise you. As soon as you are done, I'll show you the Gemara where it says this, and we'll learn through the entire Gemara. But let's just first take care of the concert this evening." "Okay," he said. "I'll do it on two conditions. First, you, Rabbi Goldwasser, say Tehillim while I am performing the concert. Secondly, you come on the stage together with me." "The first one I am able to do," I said, "but the second one, it's not my place, but your place." He agreed.

He went on to play all the songs requested by the family and friends in the circle of the girl's family. But then suddenly, in the middle of it all, he began to perform a song about emunah. The crowd loved it. He then paused, and told the crowd that he wanted to take the opportunity to teach them the song. They began joining in together. It was an incredible moment.

After that song had been completed, out came the girl on dialysis. She had been permitted by the doctor to join the concert for five minutes. She came through the door wearing a gown and mask, and yet when the crowd realized what was going on, it was the most moving of moments you could capture. People began throwing money onto the stage.

That evening raised all the money needed, including the transportation from Israel to the states and back. Moreover, the operation and transplant was successful. After many months, the family was finally ready to return to Israel.

The power that we have in this world to make a difference and help others make a difference in their own lives... it knows no limit.

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