

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Succos



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Torah Wellsprings - Succos

To Trust in Hashem, Alone

The pasuk says (Vayikra 23:42-43), בסוכות תשבו, "You should dwell in succahs for seven days... so you will *know*... I am Hashem, your G-d." The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explains that the segulah of sitting in the succah is to help us believe in Hashem.

Chazal (Succah 2.) say that a succah higher than twenty *amos* is *pasul*. The Gemara explains that if a succah is high, one will be sitting in the shade of the succah's walls, not in the shade of the schach. What lesson can we learn from this halachah?

The Aruch l'Ner (end of Succah) explains that the walls of the succah represent matters of this world that seem to help a person with his needs (such as his *parnassah*, people who help him, his *hishtadlus*), and the schach represents Hashem's *hashgachah* from above. A person must sit under the shade of the schach. He must know that the source for all his needs is Hashem's *hashgachah*, not matters of this world.

Another law of the schach is that it must be cut off from the ground. One can't take a growing plant, which is still connected to the ground, and spread it over the roof of the succah for schach. What lesson can we learn from this halachah?

It is repeated in the name of Reb Shamshon Refael Hirsh zt'l that this represents not

feeling dependent on the ground for our livelihood. For example, a farmer shouldn't think his *parnassah* comes from the ground. He must detach the plant from the ground when making the schach so he will know that his *parnassah* comes from Hashem and not from the ground. The same can be said for the people who rely on their real estate for their *parnassah*. And in general, this is a lesson for all people, regardless of whether they own property. We detach the schach from the earth to remind ourselves that our *parnassah* and needs come from Hashem alone, not from matters of this world.

Yet another halachah of the succah is that it must be situated directly under the heavens and not inside a house or under a tree (Succah 9.). Once again, this is a reminder to trust in Hashem alone. The Yerushalmi (Succah 2:3) teaches that *lechatchilah*, one should be able to see the stars through the *schach*. The Kedushas Yom Tov zt'l said that this is so people can look up at the sky through the *schach* and remember to place their trust in Hashem.

He said this explanation to his son, the Divrei Yoel, moments before his son's *chasunah*. He explained that this is also the reason a *chuppah* takes place under the heavens. It reminds the *chosson* and *kallah* not to place their trust in their parents or in anything else to support them other than Hashem alone.¹

1. Kli Yakar (Vayikra 23:42) writes, "After people harvest their crops, they want to go home to their permanent dwelling places. The Torah feared this may lead to arrogance and to forgetting Hashem. Therefore, the Torah says כל האזרח, whoever has plans to live in this world as a permanent resident, ישוב בסוכות, must first dwell in a temporary *succah*. This will remind him to be humble. He mustn't forget that he is a stranger in this world, not a permanent resident. And then, he won't place his trust in the walls of his home; he will trust in Hashem alone."

Sfas Emes (5645) writes, "The mitzvah of *succah* is the mitzvah of *bitachon*. As Chazal say, צא מדירת קבע, 'Leave your permanent dwelling...'. It teaches us to stop trusting in our possessions and start 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).

Preparing for Yom Tov

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

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* (Ha'azinu 5634) brings proof to this surprising concept from the following lesson, taught by the Shlah HaKadosh (Succah, Torah Or, 2): "During the four days between Yom Kippur and Succos, the Jewish nation is busy serving Hashem by building the *succah*, buying the four *minim*, and preparing for Yom Tov with inspiration (התעוררת הלב)." He writes that our occupation with the mitzvos purifies us, which is why we don't accumulate aveiros these days.

On the first day of Succos, when we perform the mitzvos (we sit in the succah and take the lulav), we can accumulate aveiros, *chalilah*,² but when we prepare ourselves for the mitzvos, we are free of sin. This proves that preparing for a mitzvah is more significant than performing the mitzvah.³

Every night of Succos (aside from Shabbos and Yom Tov), there was a grand celebration in the Beis HaMikdash, with music and immense joy. It was the celebration of the mitzvah of *ניסוך המים*, pouring water on the *mizbeiach*. Most of the festivities took place when they

went to draw the water from the spring. When the mitzvah of the pouring was performed, the shofar was blown, but there was no music. The Imrei Emes of Gur *zt'l* used this to show that preparing for a mitzvah is greater than doing the mitzvah. The celebration happened by the preparation, not by the performance of the mitzvah.⁴

Chazal say (*Yoma* 29), הרהורי עבירה קשין מעבירה, "Thinking about an *aveirah* is worse than doing the *aveirah*." The worst part of an *aveirah* is the preparation for it and thinking about how to perform it. The Sfas Emes (בחוקת) writes that just as thinking about an *aveirah* is worse than the *aveirah* itself, similarly, thinking about the mitzvos is greater than the mitzvah itself. "The rectification of the soul comes from thinking and desiring to serve Hashem."

It states (*Hoshea* 14:10), כי ישרים דרכי ה', צדיקים ילכו בהם, ופושעים יכשלו בהם, "for the ways of Hashem are straight, the righteous shall walk in them, and the rebellious shall stumble on them." We can explain that פושעים יכשלו בהם means the sinners just fall into the mitzvah without preparing for it. Whereas, צדיקים ילכו בהם, the *tzaddikim* prepare themselves for the mitzvos.⁵

2. It states (*Vayikra* 23:40) ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון, "Take [the lulav] on the first day." The Midrash (*Tanchuma Emor* 22) explains that the 15th of Tishrei is called the first day because "It's the first day of reckoning *aveiros*..." (לחשבון עוונות). This means that on the day we perform the mitzvos, we might have aveiros, *chalilah*, but not before then, when preparing for the mitzvos.

3. The Taz (beginning of 581) asks why preparing for a mitzvah is a stronger protection against sin than the actual performance of the mitzvah. According to the Sfas Emes, it is because the preparation is greater than the actual mitzvah.

4. Chazal say, "Whoever didn't see the joy of the *simchas beis hashoeivah*, never saw joy in his lifetime." Chazal also say that people drew *ruach hakodesh* at this celebration. The Gemara doesn't say that they drew *ruach hakodesh* from the mitzvah itself but rather from the celebration before the mitzvah, while *preparing* for the mitzvah.

5. Some buy an *esrog pushka* (a silver *esrog* box) as a gift for a *chasan*. This *hidur mitzvah* (glorifying the mitzvah) differs from most *hidur mitzvahs* because it isn't directly related to the mitzvah. For example, a silver Chanukah menorah becomes part of the mitzvah. A silver *becher* for *kiddush* and *havdalah* becomes part of the mitzvah. But the silver *esrog* box stores the *esrog* before and after the mitzvah and isn't part of the mitzvah.

This is because the *esrog* represents the heart, and the heart of a mitzvah is expressed by how much one prepares *before* performing the mitzvah and by the joy he feels *after* completing the mitzvah.

Rebbe Chaim of Sanz zt'l said that there is no nicer *נוי סוכה*, *succah* decoration, than the *tzedakah* one gives on *erev Succos*. He was cautious to give a lot of *tzedakah* on *erev Succos*.⁶

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."

Take Advantage of these Days

During the forty days that Moshe Rabbeinu was on Har Sinai to receive the Torah, he didn't eat, drink, or sleep. The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 47:7) writes, "How do we know that Moshe didn't sleep during these days? We can compare it to a king who said to a person whom he loved, 'Measure gold coins and take them for yourself.'" We can be certain that he didn't want to eat or sleep. He only wanted to measure as many coins as he could. "Similarly, Moshe was 'measuring' Torah and forgot to eat and drink. When he wanted to sleep, he said, 'If I sleep, I will lose out.'"

The Sfas Emes (5634) quotes this Midrash and explains that this is the reason Chazal (Succah 53.) tells us, "When we were in the Beis HaMikdash, celebrating the Simchas Beis HaShoeivah, we didn't fall asleep." All those participating in the *simchah* didn't want to sleep because they knew that while sleeping, they would miss out.

The Beis Yisrael zt'l would often repeat this vort from the Sfas Emes and explain that when it is Yom Tov, we must take advantage of the time. We should feel and remember how precious every moment is and not waste it. If we waste time, we lose.

Reb Yechezkel of Kuzmir zt'l found a hint from *hilchos succah* (see Shulchan Aruch 632:1-2)

to show the severity of wasting time. A succah could become *pasul* when part of the roof is covered with non-kosher *schach*. Another way the succah can become *pasul* is when there is an open space in the *schach*. When there is a space empty of *schach*, the *halachah* is more stringent because the succah becomes *pasul* with a space of just three *tefachim*. In contrast, when there is *pasul schach* mixed into the kosher *schach*, the succah becomes *pasul* only when there is four *tefachim* of it. This indicates that an empty space, which connotes idleness and nothingness, is the worst situation.

Shem MiShmuel (Shabbos Chol HaMoed Pesach 5673) writes, "Every moment of the holiday one should prepare himself to accept the holiness that is coming down non-stop." This applies to the days of Chol Hamoed, as well. We should try to utilize our time wisely.

The Mishnah (Avos 3:11) states, *המבזה את המועדות... אף על פי שיש בידו תורה ומעשים טובים אין לו חלק לעולם הבא*, "Someone who disgraces the *yomim tovim*... even if he knows Torah and he has performed good deeds, he doesn't have a portion in Olam HaBa." It is hard to write these words, but we must know the importance and the obligation to honor the *yomim tovim*. As we quoted, the words of the Mishnah are - *המבזה את המועדות*. Rabbeinu Yonah says that *מועדות* refers to *Chol Hamoed*. He explains that if the *Mishnah* was speaking about *yom tov*, it would have stated *המחלל המועדות*, someone who transgresses the *yomim tovim*. Rabbeinu Yonah adds, "The *Mishnah* doesn't need to discuss *yom tov* because *yom tov* is like *Shabbos* [and everyone understands that we must honor the *yom tov*]. Rather, it refers to *Chol Hamoed*. [How does one disgrace the *Chol Hamoed*?] By saying that it doesn't have *kedushah* like the first days."

6. The Tzanzer Rav said that he was born with a stingy nature but worked on himself and became very generous. He said that if he encounters a poor person he can't help, it feels like his skin is being ripped and torn.

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l teaches that there is special kedushah on Shabbos Chol Hamoed. He explains that throughout the year, the holiness of Shabbos is created and formed from our avodas Hashem performed during the weekdays that precede Shabbos. When it is Shabbos Chol Hamoed, however, the holiness of the yom tov was created from the holy days of yom tov that preceded it, and therefore, the Shabbos is very exalted.

שמחת בחגך - Simchah

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

Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 529:2) states, "A person is obligated to be happy and in a good mood on Yom Tov, together with his wife and children. How does he make the family happy? By giving the children nuts and roasted grains [or other foods that children enjoy] and buying clothing and jewelry for the women according to his abilities." People tend to forget about this

mitzvah, perhaps because it is so hard to keep. Even if one remembers to be happy, he might forget about his obligation to make his wife and children happy.

In Yerushalayim, there was a jewelry store near a shop selling esrogim and lulavim. A talmid chacham entered the jewelry store, while a simple yid entered the four-minim shop. Upon meeting outside, each clutching their respective purchases, the simple person proclaimed, "My purchase is superior to yours because I bought a mitzvah."

To this, the scholar responded, "You bought a mitzvah דרבנן, as that year, the first day of Succos fell on Shabbos. However, I bought a mitzvah דאורייתא. I purchased jewelry for my wife, fulfilling the Torah's mitzvah to bring happiness to my wife and family on Yom Tov."

According to the Torah, the mitzvah of lulav is only one day, while the mitzvah to be happy lasts seven days. The Imrei Noam zt'l teaches that this is because Hashem loves it when His nation is happy. Therefore He commanded the mitzvah to be happy for seven days.⁷

7. A person should consider how much he is ready to pay for a beautiful, kosher set of four minim. And then he can make a kal v'chomer to how much effort he should invest in being happy during Succos. He shouldn't allow the yetzer hara to make him sad at all. It is a mitzvah for the entire Succos, and he should force himself to be happy.

It states (Avos 2:15), ובעל הבית דוחק, "The *baal habayis* is pushing..." We can explain these words with a parable: When people come to a shoe store and take shoes out of a shoebox, they often have difficulty putting the shoes back inside the box. When they try putting in the shoes side by side, they find the box isn't wide enough. When they try placing them one on the other, the box isn't tall enough. But then the *baal habayis* of the store comes, and he slips both shoes in with ease. The *baal habayis* knows how to put the shoes together in a way that they can squeeze and fit perfectly into the box. The *nimshal* is that Hashem commanded us to be happy, which means it is within our reach and ability to be b'simchah. We are the *baal habayis* over our joy, and we can achieve it. The trick is בעל הבית דוחק, to know how to push simchah into your life, into your life challenges.

Chazal say, הבה לטהר מסייעין אותו, when a person desires to be pure, Heaven helps him. If he tries to be happy, Hashem will help him succeed. Chazal (Succah 48.) say that we must also be happy on the final night of yom tov (the night of Shemini Atzeres). The Sfas Emes taught that "the final night" hints at the hardships of the dark galus in the final generation. Even during those hard times, we are obligated to be happy.

A man once shared his troubles with Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt'l. Reb Shlomo Zalman assured him that despite his problems, happiness was within his reach.

The Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch, zt'l, advised that one should daven to be happy. Dovid HaMelech did so, as it states (Tehillim 86:4) שְׂמַח נַפְשׁ עַבְדְּךָ "Gladden your servant's soul."

A counsel for one to be happy is to believe that everything is from Hashem, and everything is exactly as it should be, and therefore, there is no room for distress. This could be the reason the mitzvah of simchah is specifically during Succos. We sit in succah to remember Hashem and His wonders, as it states (Vayikra 23:42-4i3), ...בְּסוּכוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים, "You should dwell in succahs for seven days... so you will *know*... I am Hashem, your G-d." And when we know Hashem and His wonders and hashgachah pratis, we will be extremely happy, and always satisfied with our lot.⁸

Reasons for Happiness on Succos

Be happy on Succos because Hashem is happy on Succos. The Sfas Emes (תרמ"ג ד"ה ימי)

zt'l writes, "When the Jewish nation becomes pure from all their aveiros on Yom Kippur, there is immense joy in heaven, and we should participate in Hashem's joy."

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

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

Also, we are happy on Succos because of all the mitzvos we perform on this Yom Tov. In *Hilchos Lulav* (8:15), Rambam writes, "The joy that one has when he performs mitzvos is a great service, and whoever refrains from that joy deserves to be punished."⁹

The man protested, claiming it was impossible for someone enduring his suffering to be happy.

Reb Shlomo Zalman responded, "I know someone who, after surgery, is deaf in one ear. He is also a widower, r'l. Three of his children are childless. Despite his tribulations, he is always cheerful and smiling."

The man didn't believe the story was true. "How can he be happy after suffering so much?"

Reb Shlomo Zalman revealed that he was referring to himself.

The Alter of Slabodka, zt'l, taught: When the Rambam omits a halachah from his sefer, talmidei chachamim don't simply assume that the Rambam overlooked it. They are confident that the Rambam intentionally omitted the halachah and delve into the topic to understand why. Similarly, why do you think it is a mistake when something is lacking in your life – parnassah or anything else? Of course, it is intentional, for a reason.

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

8. Rebbe Hirsh Riminover zt'l said that the *schach* hints that Hashem watches us with hashgachah pratis through the holes in the schach. Perhaps this means that the cover of the schach alludes to the times when Hashem's hashgachah isn't clearly visible. But we believe that even then, Hashem watches over us, peeking at us through the cracks in the schach. (Shir HaShirim 2:9) מוֹשִׁיחַ מִן הַחַלּוֹנוֹת, מַצִּיץ מִן הַחֲרָכִים "Observing through the windows, peering through the lattices." We are constantly under Hashem's hashgachah.

9. Rebbe Asher of Stolin zt'l said that aravos are inexpensive and can be bought with a few small coins. But then comes Hoshana Rabba, which is called in the Gemara יוֹם עֲרֵבָה, the day of taking the aravos, and it attains particular importance. This teaches us the value of mitzvos when they are performed with

Reb Chaim Vital (Hakdamah l'Shaar HaMitzvos) zt'l writes, "Do not view mitzvos as a burden, as something you wish to quickly 'get over with.' Instead, envision earning many thousands of gold coins with every mitzvah you perform. This perspective will fill you with boundless joy performing the mitzvos, as much joy as someone receiving millions of gold coins for performing this mitzvah."¹⁰

Reb Mordechai of Chernobyl zy'a said that Succos is called זמן שמחתנו, and one translation of the word זמן is to prepare. On Succos, we prepare and store up on simchah for the entire year (see Magen Avraham, Trisk, Shabbos Chol HaMoed Succos).

Rebbe Shmuel of Lubavitch (The Maharash - Maamarim, 5655) teaches, "The essence of joy [throughout the year] comes from the joy of Succos."

It states, ושמחת בחגך... והיית אך שמח. The Abarbanel writes, "This *pasuk* is a guarantee: If you are happy on Succos, you will be joyous the entire year." The Ibn Ezra on the *pasuk* ושמחת בחגך (Devarim 16: 14-16) also writes that if we are happy on Succos, we are blessed to be happy forever.

The Pele Yoetz zt'l writes, "We are commanded to be happy, and this becomes a good omen (*siman*) for the entire year. The Arizal's students write that someone who is joyous and has a happy heart, without any distress, on this holy holiday, it is certain that he will have a good and happy year."¹¹

Rashi (Bamidbar 29:18) writes that the ninety-eight sheep sacrificed on Succos¹² annul the ninety-eight curses written in parashas Ki Savo. The ninety-eight *klalos* of parashas Ki Savo are because (Devarim 28:47) תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה, "you didn't serve Hashem with joy." The Arizal says that this is to be understood literally. The curses aren't for not serving Hashem but for serving Hashem without joy. The Avnei Nezer says that on Succos, when we serve Hashem with joy, it is the perfect time to cancel the ninety-eight curses that came from the lack of joy.

Instead of *klalos*, we will enjoy brachos. The Beis Aharon (p.156.) writes, "During the yomim nora'im [Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the treasures of] bounty open up for us through our fear, and on Succos they open with our joy."¹³

simchah. It raises the value of the mitzvos exponentially.

10. In military training, soldiers typically do not use real bullets and other live ammunition, as it would be a waste. They can learn to handle their weapons without the need for actual gunpowder. However, in battle, they must use live ammunition. If they were to fail to do so, the enemy would capture them and scoff at their incompetence. The Kedushas Levi (Likutim Avos, ד"ה אם למדת) utilizes this analogy to illustrate what happens when a person serves Hashem devoid of passion and joy. "The extent of his enthusiasm determines how far he can distance himself from materialism and the level of awareness of Hashem he can achieve. However, performing mitzvos mechanically, without passion, is akin to a soldier who neglects to load his weapons with live bullets during battle.

11. About Yom Kippur it states (Vayikra 23:27) אך בעשר לחודש השביעי יום הכפורים 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 Meshech Chachmah (explains that אך can be translated as "even so." If one didn't do teshuvah, perhaps he shouldn't fast on Yom Kippur? The Torah tells us that, even so, he must fast. Succos, we celebrate the atonement. But if he didn't do teshuvah and didn't achieve atonement, perhaps he shouldn't keep Succos? So the Torah writes ,that even so, he should keep Succos.

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

13. Once, during Succos, someone informed Reb Meir of Premishlan zt'l that one of his close relatives was sick and his life was in danger. Reb Meir replied, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded us to blow the shofar

The Chozeh of Lublin zt'l was at a chasunah, performing the mitzvah of simchas chasan v'kallah. Someone asked him, "No one is happier than a chasan and kallah. Wouldn't your time be better utilized by bringing joy to people going through difficult times?"

The Chozeh answered that Chazal (see Yerushalmi Bikurim 3:3) say that all one's aveiros are forgiven on the day of his chasunah. Thus, the chasan and kallah are worried: How can they be sure they will remain pure, without sin, for the rest of their lives? So, we dance before them to teach them, "If you will be happy, you will remain pure. Your joy will protect you from falling into sin." This can be one of the reasons we have a mitzvah to be happy on Succos – it helps us maintain our purity throughout the year.¹⁴

Appropriate Joy

Shulchan Aruch (529:3) writes, "One should eat, drink, and be joyous on Yom Tov, but the focus should not be on the meat, wine, laughter, and lightheadedness, as laughter and lightheadedness do not constitute true joy. They are rather levity and foolishness. We are not obligated to engage in silliness and foolishness, but rather in the joy of serving Hashem."

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

The Ritva (*Bava Basra* 121.) explains that the typical person wasn't permitted to dance and perform stunts to ensure that the joy remained holy and that it shouldn't turn into הוללות, levity.

Sfas Emes zt'l suggests that this concept is hinted at in the word 'אך' from the verse 'והיית אך שמח'. 'אך' is a term that denotes limitation. According to this interpretation, the Torah instructs us 'והיית אך שמח', to be exceedingly joyful, but not all forms of happiness are beneficial. We must restrict the kind of joy we partake in. We should only seek the joy that originates from and leads to a connection with Hashem.¹⁵

on Rosh Hashanah, and Meir'l did so. [He was accustomed to speaking in third-person.] Hakaodsh Baruch Hu commanded us to fast on Yom Kippur, and Meir'l did so. Hakadosh Baruch Hu required us to be happy on Succos, and I want to do so. But Chazal say, אין מערבין שמחה בשמחה, one mustn't mix two joys. [On yom tov, we are happy because it is yom tov, ושמחת בחגך, and we shouldn't be happy for other reasons.] If something bad happens, I will be required to accept the sad news with joy, as Chazal say, that one must bless Hashem with joy for bad tidings, and then I will have another joy aside from the joy of yom tov. We mustn't mix two joys. Therefore, I request Hashem that my relative remain alive, so I will be able to focus my joy on the yom tov, alone."

We can use this story as a counsel to be saved from all tzaros. Be happy with the yom tov, and you won't be given other (negative) experiences, which will necessitate another element of joy. Hashem will help you be happy with the yom tov, alone.

14. After the sin of the egl, it states (Shemos 23:4) ויתאבלו, "they mourned." We were upset for performing this severe aveirah. After Adam and Chavah's sin, it states (Bereishis 3:16-17) בעצב תלדי בנים... בעצבון תאכלנו, "With sadness, you will give birth... With sadness, you will [earn your parnassah]..." We see from these sources that aveiros result in sadness.

15. People sing the song ושמחת בחגך והיית אך שמח, and they repeat the word אך several times. *Bederech tzachus*,

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

Luxuries

It states, וְה' בָּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בְּכָל, "Hashem blessed Avraham with everything." The Midrash says that בְּכָל, "everything" refers to the mitzvah of *succah*. Hashem blessed Avraham with the mitzvah of *succah*, thereby giving Avraham "everything." This means that when one has the mitzvah of *succah*, he possesses everything. What is the explanation? Why does having a *succah* equate to having everything?

The Chozeh of Lublin (*Avnei Zikaron* 662) *zt'l* explains that the *succah* reminds us of the vainness of luxuries. We live in a temporary hut for seven days, and all is fine and well. We discover that luxuries are not as essential as we thought they were. And when we know this, we have everything. We can have fewer physical possessions and be satisfied with our lot.

But when we think we can't live without luxuries, we are never satisfied. We never feel that we have הַכֹּל, "Everything." We need a renovated kitchen and a new car. When

we make a *simcha*, we need to match the wealthy, or it won't be enough. We think vacations must cost a lot of money, or it isn't enjoyable. This results in debt and hard work to cover the expenses. We are always unhappy because we never have everything we think we need, always fearing there is more and better that can be had. We avoid these problems when we learn the lesson of the *succah*. *Succah* is the blessing of הַכֹּל, "everything," that Avraham received. It endows us with the awareness that we can have little and yet have a lot. Life is always good because we don't need more.¹⁶

We learn that Avraham was happy with his portion in life from this *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 25:8): וַיָּגוּעַ וַיָּמָת אַבְרָהָם בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה זָקֵן וְשָׂבַע, "Avraham passed away at an old age, old and satisfied." The Siforno translates וְשָׂבַע as "He was satisfied with everything he desired to see and to do in his lifetime." This is a great level, and a rare level. Rabbeinu b'Chaya writes:

"This *pasuk* reveals Avraham's good *middos*. He left this world feeling fulfilled. He didn't need more... This is unlike most people about whom it states (*Koheles* 5:9), אֹהֶב כֶּסֶף, 'one who desires money will never have enough money.' And Chazal (*Koheles Rabbah* 1:32) say, 'When a person leaves the world, he hasn't attained half of what he

Reb Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt'l* said that this is based on the Chazal, אֵין מִיעוּט אַחֵר מִיעוּט אֶלָּא לְרִבּוּת, that whenever there is more than one מִיעוּט, limitation, expressed in the Torah, it means that we should increase rather than decrease. Therefore, when we sing וְהִיט אֶךְ שִׂמְחָה, and we repeat the word אֶךְ to increase our joy, not to decrease it at all. We should be extremely happy on yom tov.

Or, it can be explained this way: אֶךְ is a מִיעוּט, implying that we must know that even a tiny amount of joy is worthwhile and great accomplishment.

Another approach is that אֶךְ is a limitation, which refers to when things aren't going well for a person. The Torah instructs us וְהִיט אֶךְ שִׂמְחָה; even then, you should be happy.

16. Living a luxurious life doesn't mean you are happier than those with less. The person down the street who can't afford what you have can be just as happy with his life and even happier than you.

Every person has different needs, but one thing is certain: If you aren't happy with your portion, traveling and buying expensive items won't satisfy you. You can tour the world, live in a mansion home, and be miserable. But when you are happy with your portion, you have everything. That is the brachah that Hashem gave Avraham. He blessed him with בְּכָל, everything. This is the lesson we learn from *succah*.

wanted. If he has one hundred, he wants two hundred. If he has two hundred, he wants four hundred."¹⁷ But Avraham was satisfied and happy with his lot, and that is a wonderful level.

Rebbe Yonason Eibshitz (Yaaras Dvash 6:1) writes, "For the person who fears Hashem, he doesn't take [the lesson of] succah only on the yom tov of Succos. Throughout the year, he will remember that life is temporary and that he's a guest in this world. And, therefore, one shouldn't build expensive houses decorated with gems and diamonds for his pleasure, for this will bring him to desire more money and to sin. He will become a baal gaavah and forget Hashem Who created him. Remember Yonadav ben Rechav's precious, ethical will (see *Yirmiyahu* 35:6). He instructed his children not to live in houses. He told them to live in tents and temporary dwellings – one day here and the next day somewhere else. This is what our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov would do. They dwelt in tents. This gave them long life¹⁷ because they didn't have to worry about fires that could burn down their castles. They also didn't live in fear of enemies, hunger, or plague. [If there was a

problem], they could quickly undo the ropes of their tents and travel elsewhere.

"When Bilaam saw the Jewish nation dwelling in tents, he said, *מה טובו אהלך יעקב*, 'How good are your tents.' 'Tents' in this verse is intentional because we are a nation that dwells in tents... and that is good for us in this world and the next. But when we build houses from lime and stone, the stones will shout out all the sins of theft, pride, temptation, and desire. This is the lesson of the mitzvah of succah..."

Ushpizin

Yesod VeShoresch HaAvodah writes, "*Erev Succos*... try to find proper guests, *b'nei Torah*, for *Yom Tov*." The importance of having guests on Succos is discussed in the Zohar. The Zohar teaches that the seven *ushpizin*, Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Aharon, Yosef, and Dovid, come to our *succahs* to celebrate with us. When they arrive, they look to see if there are guests at the seudah. If guests are present, they remain in the *succah* and bless everyone. But if there are no guests, they leave. Therefore, it is important to invite guests on Succos.¹⁸

17. Reb Yonason Eibshitz also notes that the Mishkan, made from *יריעות*, skins, and woven cloth, wasn't a permanent structure. Yet, it lasted 480 years (including the years the Mishkan stood in the desert and later in Eretz Yisrael, until its final location in Nov and Givon). The Beis HaMikdash that Shlomo HaMelech built from stone and gold stood for less time – 410 years. The second Beis HaMikdash lasted 420 years, and during the 420 years, the Greeks ruled part of the time, and the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed several times. So, we see that a *דירת ארעי*, a temporary dwelling place, can last longer than permanent structures. Similarly, he says, the *avos* had fewer luxuries in their lives, and therefore, they lived long lives.

18. The Gemara (*Avodah Zorah* 3) tells us that when Hakadosh Baruch Hu rewards the Jewish nation, the nations of the world will request another opportunity to keep the Torah so they too can receive reward. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will say, "Fools! It is too late to perform mitzvos. Nevertheless, I have a simple mitzvah, it is called *succah*. Keep this mitzvah [and I will grant you reward]."

The Gemara relates, "Immediately, the goyim will go up to their rooftops and build a *succah* there. Hakadosh Baruch Hu will have the sun shine brightly; it will become sweltering for them. They will get up, kick their *succos*, and leave." The Gemara explains that although Yidden may also leave the *succah* when it's very hot, for the halachah is *מצטרע פטור מן הסוכה*, someone who is in distress is exempt from succah, but a Yid never kicks the *succah* when he leaves. The nations of the world will kick the *succah* in disdain, and therefore, they don't deserve any reward.

B'derech tzachus, we can say that they intentionally built their *succos* on their rooftops because they didn't want people knocking at their door, asking for a meal. Contrarily, Yidden seek to have guests on Succos.

Staying Focused

The Gemara (*Succah* 3) requires that ראשו ורובו ושולחנו בתוך הסוכה, one's head, most of his body, and table be inside the *succah*. One cannot sit partially in the and mostly out of the *succah*.

Even his table must be in the *succah*. The Sfas Emes explains this *halachah* to mean that we must be immersed in the mitzvah, involved in it, happy with it, and think about it. One shouldn't physically sit in the *succah* with his head and heart elsewhere.²¹ Even

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

Many people in Yerushalayim would bring their four *minim* to Reb Shimon Aharon Polonski zt'l, the Tepliker Rav, for his expert opinion on their level of *kashrus* and *hidur*. The Rav would then ask for a donation for the poor of Yerushalayim.

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

The Tepliker Rav told him, "You can borrow the four *minim* from a friend. You aren't obligated to buy your own set. However, if a poor family is sad on Yom Tov because they couldn't afford a meal, and they shed even one tear, that creates a *kitrug* in heaven, which is very hard to silence."

One year, on the first day of Succos, the Tepliker Rav asked someone to lend him his *esrog* since he didn't have his own. How did it happen that he didn't have his own *esrog*? This is the story: On *Erev* Succos, the Tepliker Rav heard shouts from his neighbor's home. He knew this family. They had lost their father, there were young orphans at home, and the mother had remarried, but things weren't going so smoothly.

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

The Tepliker Rav told them, "I will give you another *esrog*. You don't have to tell him what happened. Just say that I asked to see his *esrog* and ruled it was *pasul*, so I gave you another *esrog*." The Tepliker Rav gave them the *esrog* that he had bought for himself. He could borrow an *esrog*, but now he had to help this family.

Esrogim used to be very expensive, and Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz zt'l would put aside money throughout the year, to have enough funds to buy the four *minim*. One year, as he was walking with his package of money to buy an *esrog*, he saw a simple Yid crying bitterly. He asked him what happened.

The man told him that his horse had died, and he couldn't afford to buy another one. He explained that he needed a horse for his *parnassah*. Rebbe Mordechai of Neshchiz handed him his money bag and told him to buy a horse. With the leftover money, he purchased an *esrog*. It was a kosher *esrog* but not *mehudar*, as he generally bought. When he came home, he told his family, "This *Yom Tov*, everyone will make a *brachah* on a beautiful *esrog*. 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*." Rebbe Mordechai told him how he was *moser nefesh* to help his fellow man. That merit brought a scent of Gan Eden in his otherwise simple *esrog*.

21. Someone driving a new Mercedes approached the border. The border police checked the trunk to see whether he was bringing undeclared merchandise over the border. All they found was buckets of soil.

"What's this for?" they asked.

"I'm building a house, and earth good for construction is cheaper in the other country. I go there and fill my buckets with dirt to build my home."

his table should be in the succah. The table represents the family. The head of the family should create a joyous atmosphere in the succah so that his wife and children will be absorbed with the Yom Tov and its mitzvos.

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

The Torah (Vayikra 33:42-43) writes, בסוכות תשבו שבעת ימים... למען ידעו... כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים, "For seven days you shall sit in the succah...to know that I had Bnei Yisrael sit in succos when I took them out of the land of Mitzrayim."

This is one of the few times the Torah explicitly tells us the reason for a mitzvah. Hashem obligates us to sit in a succah, so we will remember that we sat in succos when we left Mitzrayim. And since the Torah tells us the reason for the mitzvah, the Bach says that we must have the reason in mind when we perform the mitzvah. It isn't sufficient to

think, "This is Hashem's will. I am performing Hashem's mitzvah." That thought may be adequate for most mitzvos of the Torah, but this time, the Torah requires us to think about the reason for the mitzvah.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (625:1) writes, "When one sits in the *succah* he should think that [this mitzvah is to] remind us of *yetzias Mitzrayim* and to remember the ענני הכבוד, the clouds of glory, in which Hashem surrounded us in the desert to protect us from the elements. One should think these thoughts; in this manner, he will keep the mitzvah properly. However, *bedi'eved*, one fulfilled the mitzvah even if he only had in mind that he is performing Hashem's mitzvah."

On Succos, it is important to contemplate why we have this mitzvah. We can explain that it is because one should keep the mitzvah of *succah* with his whole being, including his mind. He should think about his actions and be connected to the mitzvos.

Ideally, all mitzvos should be performed with mind, heart, and soul. There are endless reasons for the mitzvos; the tzaddikim revealed some of them over the generations.

They didn't believe him. It didn't make sense to import dirt to save a few pennies, so they sifted through the earth, expecting to find hidden contraband, but couldn't find anything. They let him pass.

The following day, he arrived at the border again in his shiny Mercedes. The border patrol sifted through the soil again, didn't find anything, and let him go. This happened daily. After a while, they stopped sifting through the earth because they knew they wouldn't find anything exciting.

One day, he informed the guards that he won't be coming anymore. "I'm just about finished building my house, so there's no reason for me to bring more earth," he said.

The border police couldn't contain their curiosity any longer. They said, "Tell us why you carried dirt over the border daily. We don't believe you were importing earth to save a few pennies."

He replied, "If you promise not to arrest me, I will tell you."

They promised, and he said, "I am a luxury car dealer. You thought you were seeing the same car every day, but every day, I imported another brand-new Mercedes tax-free. I needed a decoy so that you wouldn't suspect me, so I began importing earth. That took your focus away from what was really happening."

This mashal reminds us to stay focused on what is important and not get distracted by trivialities. There is a lot to focus on these days. We can focus on being happy, on the greatness of the mitzvos, and the lessons of the mitzvos. 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 great things to accomplish now.

It is a mitzvah to think about the reasons for the mitzvos when performing them.

The Meiri writes, "A person who eats matzah on Pesach and sits in a *succah* on Succos, is like a donkey that carries wheat during the wheat harvest and grapes during the grape harvest season...."

The Meiri teaches us that "time" shouldn't be the only reason we keep mitzvos. About this, it states (Tehillim 119) עת לעשות לה' הפרו תורתך, "A time to do for Hashem; they have voided Your Torah." The Meiri explains: עת לעשות לה', when one keeps the mitzvos solely because the time has arrived for the mitzvah, הפרו תורתך, he transgressed the Torah, *chalilah*. עבדך אני, I am Your servant; therefore, הבנני teach me the reasons behind the mitzvos so that I can perform them correctly.²²

The Four Minim

The Beis Yosef (651) brings the following story:

"In a dream, the Rikanti saw HaRav Yitzchak Ashkenazi writing Hashem's name, but he wrote the final *heh* slightly apart from the first three letters. The Rikanti didn't

know the meaning of the dream. The next day, he saw Rav Yitzchak holding the *esrog* apart from the *lulav*. Then, he understood the meaning of the dream. He told Reb Yitzchak Ashkenazi that the four *minim* represent the four letters of Hashem's name, with the *esrog* representing the final *heh*. One must hold them together so that Hashem's name be connected."

We tell this story to help us understand the mitzvah's holiness. Holding the four *minim* is like holding Hashem's holy name in our hands.

The Sar Shalom of Belz *zy'a* adds that although the four letters must be near each other, some space is required between them. This is why we use *koisheklach* (*lulav* holders). They serve as a divider between the four *minim*.

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..." Keviyachol, when we hold the four *minim*, we hold Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself. We don't know exactly what that means, but it

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

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

The Yidden explained to the judge that these were false witnesses, and the judge suspected that it was so. However, even after cross-examining the witnesses, the witnesses stuck to their narrative. Without proof that the witnesses were lying, the lives of all Yidden in the area were in danger.

One wise Yid told the judge, "Nowadays, there is a new method to identify murderers. Modern courts use trained bloodhounds. The dog smells the victim's blood and can determine who is the murderer."

The judge agreed to use this test. The judge instructed everyone to gather in the town square. (The Yidden were also there, *Tehillims* in hand.) The judge had a dog smell the blood-stained clothing, and the dog led them directly to the true murderer.

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

Reb Eliyah Lopian concluded, "The dog didn't know it was saving the Jewish community. It only knew to smell the blood and go to the person with the same scent.

However, when we keep the mitzvos (*succah*, *lulav*, etc.) we should know what we're doing."

reveals just a drop of the holiness of the mitzvah and the privilege we have to perform it.

Based on these ideas, Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zy'a* explains the *pasuk*, ה' לי לא אירא. He teaches, ה' לי, "Since Hashem is with me [as I hold the four *minim*] לא אירא, I have nothing to fear."²³

Reb Shimon Deutsch *zt'l* (*Imrei Shefer*) writes, "My teacher, the Chasam Sofer *zt'l*, would [hold the four *minim* throughout the entire *tefillah*]. He explained that he loved the mitzvah and that holding the four *minim* helped him daven with greater kavanah. The Chasam Sofer said he has more kavanah on Succos while holding the four *minim* than on Yom Kippur."

The Midrash teaches that the four *minim* represent the human body: The *esrog* represents the heart, the *lulav* the spine, the *hadasim* 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*. We don't need to take the four *minim* on Shabbos because Shabbos awakens us.

The Shevet Mussar explains that *yavesh* (dried-out *esrog* and *lulav*) is *pasul* because one needs to be fresh and alive when serving Hashem, not shriveled up and dry. And, indeed, that is the segulah of the four *minim*

– to awaken us so we can serve Hashem with a *chiyus* and vigor.²⁴

Esrog

Tzaddikim said that if people knew the value of the *esrog*, they would spend all the money in the world to acquire one.²⁵

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

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

One year, there were very few *esrogim* available on the market, so the Vilna Gaon *zt'l* gave a couple of his students a large sum of money and instructed them to seek an *esrog*.

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

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

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

25. The Torah mentions *esrog* first, as it states פרי עץ הדר וכפות תמרים, etc., while the Mishnayos (*Succah* ch.3) mentions the laws of *esrog* last. Why did the Mishnah change the order?

Chazal tell us that the *esrog* represents the heart, the *lulav* the spine, *hadasim* the eyes, and the *aravos* the lips. The Mishnah reveals that if you want a pure heart, begin with being cautious with your eyes, speech, and deeds. Then, they will be pure, too.

They explained that they needed it for the Vilna Gaon. Finally, he agreed to sell it on condition that he would get the reward of the Vilna Gaon's mitzvah.

The students feared that the Gaon wouldn't be happy with this condition, but having no choice, they agreed.

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

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

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

Rebbe Michel of Zlotchov *zt'l* was very poor; sometimes, his children went hungry. But there was one item of value in their home. It was an inheritance of the holy tefillin of Reb Michel Zlotchover's father, Reb Yitzchak of Derohovitz *zt'l*. Reb Michel refused to sell them.

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

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

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

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

That night, he saw his father in his dream. His father told him that he performed a great deed when he sold the tefillin to buy the esrog, but the second deed, that he controlled his anger, was an even greater accomplishment. His father said, "Your ability to control your anger was more precious in heaven than your *mesirus nefesh* to buy the *esrog*. Many *gezeiros raos* [harsh decrees] were annulled in the merit of your restraint."²⁶

26. Back in the day, when esrogim were hard to come by and extremely expensive, community members would chip in and buy one. The wealthier people were expected to contribute more than the less affluent individuals, but everyone had to contribute towards the purchase.

In one town, a certain wealthy person refused to contribute to the esrog fund. He thought, "Our wealthy rosh hakahal is wealthier than me. He will certainly cover the shortfall; why should I part with my hard-earned money?"

That is precisely what occurred. The wealthy rosh hakahal paid the difference, and they bought an esrog. The four minim were kept in the rosh hakahal's home because he paid the lion's share of the purchase. Yom tov morning, the townspeople lined up in front of the rosh hakahal's house for a turn to shake the

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

"It isn't my fault that they listen to me," the Satan replies. "They are a wise nation and should ignore my enticements."

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

A few days later, they buy an esrog, a citrus fruit with a retail value of a few cents, and pay a fortune for it. The malachim say, "See how easily they can be tricked."

Thus, the Satan is held responsible for their sins, and the Yidden are inscribed for a good year.

The Bardichover Rav zt'l relates that he once met the Satan and asked him why he appeared so sad.

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

Sometime later, the Berditchever Rav found the Satan; this time, the Satan was happy. "Why are you so happy?" the Rav asked. "Just a while ago, you were so sad. What happened?"

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

On Chol HaMoed Succos, the Satan was sad again. The Berditchever Rav asked him why."

The Satan replied, "This year, most Yidden didn't shake lulav, but they all yearned immensely for the mitzvah, and their yearning was so precious to Hashem. Additionally, a few Yidden bought *esrogim* at very high prices and rejoiced with the mitzvah. All these things combined (the desire, price, and the joy) are very precious to Hashem, even more than had all the *esrogim* arrived."²⁷

four minim. The wealthy miser was also in line. When it was his turn, the rosh hakahal refused to give it to him. "We almost didn't have this mitzvah because of you; you don't deserve to use it."

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

Later that morning, the rosh hakahal walked to the beis medresh to daven shacharis and shake the four minim during Hallel. The wealthy miser ran over to the rosh hakahal in middle of the street, shouted the brachos על נטילת לולב ושהחיינו, lifted the rosh hakahal and shook him in all six directions. He so desired to perform this mitzvah, which was the closest he could get to it. When the rav of the community saw this, he told the *rosh hakahal* to forgive him and allow him 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 merciful *malach* said, "Did we place the mitzvah of the four minim 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* turned him away), but it still wasn't sufficient. The scale is still tipped to the side of guilt."

The *malach* said, "We should add the weight of the *rosh hakahal* because he lifted the *rosh hakahal* to keep the mitzvah."

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

27. Rebbe Moshe Lelover zt'l began his journey to settle in Eretz Yisrael during Elul. He prepared himself for the trip with a shofar for Rosh Hashanah and the four minim. He also carried a large sum of money

The Holiness of the Succah

The Rema (Orach Chaim 1:1) teaches, "The way a person sits, moves, and acts when he is alone in his home is different than how he sits, moves, and acts when he is in the presence of a great king. The way he speaks freely with his family is different from how he speaks when he is with a king." The Rema is teaching us that we should remember that we are always before Hashem, and then we will conduct ourselves with yiras Shamayim at all times. This lesson is especially applicable when we sit in the succah. At this time, we are before Hashem, and we should act accordingly.

Reishis Chachmah (Shaar HaKedushah ch.4) writes, "This was the custom of my teacher, the Remak. He wouldn't speak anything in the succah, other than divrei Torah, because the holiness of the succah is very great. Proof of this is the wood of the succah. It has kedushah, and we are forbidden to derive pleasure from it all seven days of Succos."

Mishnah Berurah (632:2) writes, "Since the kedushah of the succah is very great, it is proper to limit the amount one speaks there. He should only speak words of kedushah and Torah. Certainly, he should be cautious not to speak lashon hara, rechilus, or other forbidden words in the succah."

Bikurei Yaakov (639:2) writes, "The Shlah warned severely that one shouldn't become angry in the succah."

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

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

Yaaras Dvash (vol.1 drush 6) writes, "Hashem's cloud hovers over the succah. Although we don't see it, it is certain that whoever sits in the succah *l'shem shamayim* and learns Torah there and is happy with the yom tov and the mitzvos, Hashem's cloud hovers above him."²⁸

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

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

that his chasidim in Europe gave him to help him settle in Eretz Yisrael.

They were still on the ship as Succos approached, and he noticed that his aravos had dried up. He asked the captain to stop at an island so he could cut aravos off a tree, but the captain refused to stop. Why should he delay the entire ship just for one person who wanted willows? Rebbe Moshe continued to plead and offered him the money he had with him, an offer the captain couldn't refuse. With mesirus nefesh, he paid so much money to keep the mitzvah of four minim.

When he arrived in Eretz Yisrael, he sent a letter to his chasidim in chutz l'aretz requesting money to settle in Eretz Yisrael. They were surprised because they had given him much money before he left. After some inquiries, they heard what had happened. All money in the world didn't compare to his joy in serving Hashem.

28. Some tzaddikim were careful that a goy shouldn't enter the *succah* because of the great sanctity there.

According to halachah, a succah must be made of at least two complete walls and one smaller wall, the length of a *tefach*. The holy sefarim explain that this represents an arm, which is made up of two larger parts and a *tefach*, the palm. These walls of the succah signify that when we sit in the succah, keviyachol, it is like Hashem is hugging us.²⁹

It states (Shir HaShirim 1:4) הַבִּיאֲנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ חֲדָרָיו, "The king brought me into His [innermost] chambers. נְגִילָה וְנִשְׂמָחָה בְּךָ, "We will rejoice with You." There is joy in the succah. When we are in the succah, we are in Hashem's innermost chamber, a place of immense joy. As Chazal (Chagigah 5:) say, after the churban Beis HaMikdash, Hashem cries in His outer chambers and is happy in His innermost chambers.³⁰

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

The Pri Megadim states: One mustn't use a *succah* as a shortcut and it is certainly forbidden to spit there because the *succah* is holy and has laws similar to those of the Beis HaMikdash.

Arizal teaches that one's table in the succah should have four legs to resemble the Shulchan of the Beis HaMikdash, which had four legs.³¹ Chazal consider the possibility that a succah needs to be built on Har HaBayis, next to the Beis HaMikdash. This theory is disproved in the end. Nevertheless, a *הוא אמינה*, an initial thought of Chazal, also has significance, and it points to the holiness of the succah. Its holiness is similar to that of the Beis HaMikdash, which is built on the Har HaBayis.

Some people don't sing (or say) "Shalom Aleichem" on Friday night of Succos. Shem MiShmuel explains that the kedushah of the succah is so great that malachim cannot enter there.³²

29. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* taught that Hashem tends to us during these days in the same manner as a mother cares for her child. On Rosh Hashanah, בְּלֹאזֶט מֵעַן אוֹנוֹ אֵפ, Hashem blows on us and blows away our impurities. On Yom Kippur, וּוָאֵשֶׁט מֵעַן אוֹנוֹ אֵפ, Hashem washes us, as it says, וּזְרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִיַּם טְהוֹרִים, "I will throw onto you purifying waters" (Yechezkel 36). And on Succos, דַּעֲקֵט מֵעַן אוֹנוֹ צִי, Hashem covers and swaddles us.

Similarly, the Ohev Yisrael (Likutim) says that a chicken first feeds its chicks and then covers them under its feathers. This is how the Shechinah interacts with us during these days. On Rosh Hashanah, Hashem gives us *parnassah*, and on Succos, Hashem takes us under His wings.

30. Rashi learns the opposite, that Hashem cries in the inner chambers and is happy in the outer chambers. Perhaps this can be compared to the Chovos HaLevavos (Prishus 4) הַפְּרוֹשׁ צִהְלָתוֹ בְּפָנָיו וְאֵבְלוּ בְּלִבּוֹ, that a *tzaddik*, "The joy is on his face and his mourning in his heart." The joy is seen, but where it can't be seen, that is where Hashem has distress from the tzaros of Klal Yisrael. Our commentary above follows the view of Rabbeinu Chananel that Hashem's joy is in the inner quarters, and the distress of the Churban is expressed in the outer chambers. This is why there is judgment on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but when Succos comes, we enter Hashem's inner chambers, the place of Hashem's joy.

31. We repeat this not necessarily so people should go out and buy a table with four legs, but rather to highlight the holiness of the succah, which resembles the Beis HaMikdash.

32. For those who say Shalom Aleichem, there is a question about whom one should invite first, the malachim (with Shalom Aleichem), or the holy ushpizin into the succah.

Someone told the Satmer Rebbe *zt'l* that he thinks we should invite the malachim first because the rule is תְּדִיר וּשְׂאִינוֹ תְּדִיר קוֹדֵם, whatever is more frequent comes first. Shalom Aleichem is recited every Friday night and should be said first.

The Satmer Rebbe disagreed. He said that although the words of the Shalom Aleichem are the same each week, different malachim come each week. This is because the level of malachim that come to his home

We say in the Hoshanos (אום אני חומה) the words, הושענא... השואגים הושע נא, "Hashem should save... those who shout out Hosha Na." The question is, why do we need to shout? Hashem answers our tefillos when we daven silently, as well. As we say in the tefillos of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, וכל מאמינים שהוא עונה לחש, "Everyone believes that Hashem answers silent tefillos." Rebbe Shalom of Belz zt'l answers that on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we should daven silently because we want to hide our tefillos from the malachim, the mikatrigim, who wish to capture our tefillos and prevent them from ascending to heaven. But on Succos, when we sit in the succah, we are shielded from all the mikatrigim. Therefore, we can pray in a loud voice, we can shout הושע נא, and our tefillos will go up and be answered.

The Zohar (vol.3 p.100:, which some people say before the tekiyas) states that Yaakov Avinu escaped from Eisav and ran into a succah.

The Bnei Yissaschar (Tishrei 10:7) writes, "With the *or makif*, the holy light of the succah, all tumah (*chitzonim*) flee from him."

Worthy of Gan Eden

The Shem MiShmuel (5673) teaches that, although everyone sits in the *succah*, only those who are worthy can experience its great joy and holiness. The Shem MiShmuel explains, "If the *succah* accepts a person, he will experience a good feeling while in the *succah*. But *chas veshalom*, if the *succah* doesn't accept him, he will not be happy there. If one enjoys sitting in the *succah*, it is a sign that the *succah* accepted him. This can't be seen. It is the feelings of the heart and

revealed only to Hashem." The Shem MiShmuel compares it to *teivas Noach*, which didn't accept the animals that sinned in it.

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

The Shem MiShmuel answers that it is visible that we kept the external aspect of the mitzvos. Hashem testifies that we kept the inner spirit as well, that as we sat in the succah, we experienced the joy and holiness of the *succah*.

The Shem MiShmuel adds that Succos comes right after Yom Kippur because one needs to be *tahor* from all sins to be spiritually accepted into the *succah*.

Succah for Everyone

Nevertheless, let us encourage all those who don't yet enjoy being in the succah, by letting them know that they too accomplish a great deal just by being there. Rebbe Avraham Yaakov of Sadigura zt'l said that this is why a succah is made from פסולת גורן ויקב, the leftover branches of the vineyard and the wasted stalks of crops (see Succah 12.). It teaches us that the succah is even for those who feel they are פסולת, leftover, and unimportant.

Chazal (Succah 22.) say המעובה כמין בית כשרה, if the schach on the succah is very thick and appears like a house, it is also kosher. Tzaddikim said that this alludes to the Yidden, who are מעובה כמין בית very thick,

on Shabbos night depends on his deeds during the week and on the amount he prepared himself during the week for Shabbos.

Therefore, the Satmer Rebbe said that as far as what is more תדיר, more common, the ushpizin and the malachim are considered equal. The question thus remains who should one invite into the succah first, the malachim or the ushpizin? The Satmer Rebbe said, "In my opinion, the ushpizin should be invited first because the ushpizin are tzaddikim, and tzaddikim are greater than malachim."

coarse, and gashmiyosdig. The succah is for them, too.³³

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

His Rebbe told him, "A Yid is also comprised of Hashem's names. *Sheimos* may go on top of *sheimos*."

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 the succos..." תשבו has the same letters as בושה, shame. The Yeitev Lev (*Yeitev Panim Succos* 10) explains that one should feel embarrassed to enter the holy *succah*. How does he have the audacity to enter such a sacred place? The answer is with thoughts of *teshuvah*. As the *pasuk* continues, כל האורה. The word האורה can mean "I will shine." It is in the future tense - "Although I am not worthy to enter the *succah* right now, in the merit that I plan to improve my ways, I am able to enter the *succah*."

The *pasuk* concludes, כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים, "I had Bnei Yisrael sit in succos when I took them out of the land of Mitzrayim." When they left Mitzrayim, they weren't worthy either, but in the merit that they would receive the Torah in the future, they were able to sit in the *succah*. Similarly, because I plan to improve my ways, I have the right to be in the *succah*, even now.

Salvations from the Succah

Chazal say מצטער פטור מן הסוכה, meaning that when one has tzaar (discomfort or pain due to sitting in the succah), he is exempt from keeping this mitzvah. The Tiferes Shlomo taught that these words hint at one of the benefits we earn from keeping the mitzvah of succah. מצטער פטור, one becomes freed from his tzaros, מן הסוכה, when he performs the mitzvah of succah.

The Yitav Lev *zt'l* said that even if the decree on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur was חייב, guilty, chas v'shalom, on Succos, the חייב can become roshei teivos for (Tehillim 149:5) יעלוזו חסידים בכבוד ירננו, "The pious will exult in glory; they will sing praises..." Everything can turn around; there will be happiness, and good things will come to him.

The end of the *pasuk* is ירננו על משכבותם, "...they will sing praises on their beds." The Sfas Emes (5653) says that this *pasuk* alludes to the ענני הכבוד, clouds of glory that protected Bnei Yisrael in the desert, and to the mitzvah of succah. He explains that ירננו על משכבותם refers to the mitzvah of succah because that is the only mitzvah we perform when sleeping. It is called בכבוד, for this mitzvah commemorates the ענני הכבוד. This mitzvah results in יעלוזו חסידים, a lot of joy for the righteous because the mitzvah of succah brings salvation.

The mitzvah of succah is mesugal for a long life. The Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l* learned this from the *pasuk* (*Vayikra* 23:42) כל האורה בישראל, "Every resident of Yisrael shall dwell in succahs." The word אורה is gematriya גבורה, mighty, and the *pasuk* says (Tehillim 90:10)

33. This is also hinted by the lulav, which we shake in all directions (see Succah 37:). We go up and down with the lulav, indicating that those who are low can rise high. We shake the lulav back and forth, מוליד, suggesting that those who are מוליד away from the kedushah, מביא, can return because, on Succos, everyone can return to Hashem.

In contrast, the Gemara (Succah 25:) says, מצטער פטור מן הסוכה, when one has tzaar, he is exempt from succah. The Kotzker *zt'l* explains that he shouldn't feel any tzaar or pain since he is in the holy succah, under Hashem's wings. If he feels distressed in the succah, פטור מן הסוכה, this demonstrates that he hasn't attached himself to the essence and holiness of the succah.

אם בגבורות שמונים שנה, that the mighty live up until eighty. So, there is an indication in the

pasuk that for keeping the mitzvah of succah, one will merit to live long.³⁴

34. Reb Nota Freund zt'l of Yerushalayim told the following story after hearing it from the Tzelemer Rav zt'l.

The Tzelemer Rav was visiting a friend in an old-age home when an old person approached him and asked to speak to him. The old man said that he was 116 years old and requested that the rav daven that he die.

The Tzelemer Rav said, "You appear healthy, with a sound mind; why do you want to die?"

The old man said, "My son is ninety years old; he is also here in this old-age home. But he suffers terribly. I can't bear to see him suffering. That's why I want to leave the world."

The Tzelemer Rav went to visit the son. He saw him lying in bed, in terrible pain. The son said, "I know I will live another four years."

The Tzelemer Rav asked, "How do you know that?" but the son didn't have the strength to answer. So, the Tzelemer Rav returned to the 116-year-old father and asked for an explanation.

The old man said, "I lived in Kalamaya as a youth. When I turned twenty, I worked in the local post office, delivering letters in Kalamaya. Soon, they saw that I was strong, so they gave me the job of delivering heavy packages to their intended addresses.

"Erev Succos, I came to the post office, as I did every day, and I saw a package of sefarim for Reb Hillel Kalamaya zt'l. I understood that Reb Hillel might want to learn from these sefarim on Succos, so I immediately took the heavy package and brought it to Reb Hillel's home. I saw him sad, and that surprised me, especially since it was erev Succos, *זמן שמחתנו*! His succah was standing and decorated, he had the four minim, so I asked Reb Hillel why he was so sad.

"He replied that he is afraid to sleep in the succah, because lately, the goyim in his neighborhood were getting drunk and rowdy at night. His succah was centrally located, and many people passed it. The wild goyim might break into his succah in the middle of the night, and they might harm him.

"I said, 'Reb Hillel! I am strong. I will sleep with you in the succah and protect you from the goyim.' Reb Hillel was delighted with this arrangement.

"I stayed in his succah the entire yom tov. I slept with a stick near my bed. On the first night, after we went to sleep, the goyim came to the succah. I chased them away. They returned the next night, and the night after that, but they received a beating from me each time, until they figured out they would be better off not coming back anymore. There was peace and quiet for the second half of Succos.

"At the end of the yom tov, Reb Hillel gave me a brachah that I should live until 120 years with good health, and that none of my children should die in my lifetime. And as you can see, the brachah has come to fruition. My son apparently understood from this story that he has another four years to live..."

The Tzelemer Rav was very inspired by this story and told the old man not to daven to die. He should instead daven that his son should have a refuah sheleimah.

Before leaving the old-age home, the Tzelemer Rav spoke to the staff and asked them to contact him if anything changed regarding the old man's health. He also visited the old man from time to time.

Four years later, the home contacted the Tzelemer Rav to tell him that the old man was niftar, at exactly 120 years old. An hour afterwards, they informed him that the son was also niftar.

We learn from this story that (a) if you help others keep the mitzvah of succah, you can merit long life. (b) Have hakaras hatov for those who help you, especially those who help you perform the mitzvah of succah. (c) We also see from this story the influence of the brachos of tzaddikim. Reb Hillel's brachah fulfilled to the last detail.

The Yesod HoAvodah says that he will also merit health, as it states (Devarim 32:39) *מַחֲצִיתִי וְאֲנִי אֶרְפָּא*, that with the *מַחֲצִיתִי*, the walls of the succah, there will be refuah.

The Kaf HaChaim (siman 621:6) teaches, "Whoever is cautious with the mitzvah of succah, to keep it properly, is guaranteed that there won't be disputes in his home throughout the year." Sitting in the succah is a segulah for attaining shalom bayis.

Segulas Yisrael (מערכת מ' אות י"ח) writes that learning masechta Succah, any day of the year, is mesugal to be saved from machlokes. The hint is (Tehillim 31:21) *תִּצְּרֶנּוּ בְּסוּכָה מְרִיבֵי לְשׁוֹנוֹת*, "Protect them in a succah from the disputes of tongues." Reb Naftoli of Ropshitz zt'l would study masechta Succah throughout the year, and he said that it is mesugal for shalom bayis.

Learning masechta Succah is also mesugal for bringing Moshiach, as we say in the tefillah, *יְפָרוּשׁ ה' סוּכַת שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם*, that Hashem should bring peace to us, to all Yidden, and to Yerushalayim.

The mitzvah of succah is mesugal for parnassah. Tiferes Shlomo says that this is hinted at in the Mishnah (Succah 28.) *מִי שֶׁהִיא*, "A person who

his head and most of his body are in the succah and his table is in the home." Alluded in these words is that from the mitzvah of succah, he brings parnassah to his table in his home. Another indication is the Gemara (Succah 29.) *מִנָּה מֵיכֵלָא חוּץ לְסוּכָה*, that also when he is *חוּץ לְסוּכָה*, outside the succah, he will receive *מֵיכֵלָא*, food, and parnassah because he performed the mitzvah of succah.

Sfas Emes (5637) says, "The mitzvah of succah brings brachah and a light of kedushah to the person's home [throughout the year]."

The Sfas Emes (5658) explains the brachah of Shemoneh Esrei, *מֶלֶךְ מִמִּית וּמַחֲיָה וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה*, as follows: *מֶלֶךְ מִמִּית וּמַחֲיָה*, "a King Who gives life and death," this occurs on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. *וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה*, "He sprouts salvations," this happens on Succos because on Succos, salvations come, and the harsh gezeiros are ripped up. "The purpose of the judgment of Rosh Hashanah was to cause these salvations to sprout."

Hoshana Rabbah

The translation of Hoshana Rabbah is "a great salvation" because many salvations come to us from this special day.³⁵

35. One of the members of our chaburah in Chaifa shared the following personal story:

"My 6-year-old son has been suffering from severe strabismus (cross-eye) for a year now. Of course, we took him to doctors who tried special eyeglasses and other methods, with no success.

During the month of Tammuz (תשפ"ה) the doctor determined that surgery was the only option and scheduled the surgery for Thursday, the 8th day of Tishrei (תשפ"ה), the week of Yom Kippur.

The doctor conducted additional testing on the 26th of Elul and confirmed the need to operate.

On Erev Rosh Hashana, I gathered my family. I told them the story of the Nesivos Shalom Zt"l, who had to undergo surgery while being seriously ill and asked the doctor to postpone the surgery until after the Yamim Noraim, because the power of tefilla is so great during this period. It can **accomplish everything, including eliminating the need for surgery**. Indeed, after the holy days, he appeared before the doctor and was found entirely healthy, and his surgery was canceled.

Based on this story, I urged my family members to daven that our son shouldn't require surgery.

Throughout Rosh Hashanah, we reminded each other of the story of the Nesivos Shalom and prayed for our son.

And wonders of wonders - we returned to the doctor on Monday afternoon, the 5th day of Tishrei, who

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz zt'l said that Hoshana Rabbah can be translated in three ways, and they are all correct. (a) הושענא רבא

Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Tchortkov *zt'l* (whose *yahrtzeit* is on Hoshana Rabbah) said that Hoshana Rabba means we will be saved in the merit of saying "Amen yehei shmei *rabbah*" ³⁷

The medical records can be seen here below. This story is a powerful reminder of the incredible power of prayer these days.

[illegible]

ט' סיון ה'תשס"ו

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37. Chazal say, "Whoever answers *Amen yehei shmei rabbah* with all his might, his judgment is ripped up." Reb Yochanan says, "Even if one has the sin of *avodah zorah*, he will be forgiven" (*Shabbos* 119).

The Divrei Yoel of Satmar zt'l would daven very long on Hashana Rabbah. One year, Hashana Rabbah was on Friday, and the gabbaim announced that the women should go home to light Shabbos lecht because it was almost Shabbos, and the tefillos weren't over yet. At that time, the Satmar Rebbe shared the following mashal:

The people of a certain city committed a grave offense against the king, and they were all sentenced to death. Every year, on a certain date, the king visited a garden in this city. The elders of the city decided that they should go to the garden on the designated day, meet with the king, and plead for mercy and forgiveness.

The elders assembled in the garden on the appointed day. They waited for the king, but the king wasn't there! As the day was ending, many wanted to go home. They realized that their plan had failed. One wise elder proposed a different perspective. "The king's custom is to visit this garden on this day," he reasoned, "so he must be here, only he came disguised as a common citizen. Let's call out to the king and implore him to save us. He will surely hear us and forgive us."

The Satmar Rebbe cried, "We think the King is not here, but He is certainly present. If we cry out to Him, He will listen to our tefillos. Let's raise our voices together and cry out, 'הושע נא והשיעה נא אבינו אתה!'"

The Awesome Judgment

Everyone knows that Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are days of judgment; therefore, we do teshuvah and daven a lot

on them. The Kabbalah sefarim reveal that Hoshana Rabbah is also a day of judgment.³⁸ But since Shas and poskim hardly mention the judgment on Hoshana Rabbah, most people weren't aware of this aspect of the day.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l explained that in the early generations, the fear of judgment was so great that if people knew that Hoshana Rabbah was a day of judgment, it would ruin their *simchas yom tov*. Therefore, the judgment was concealed from them so they could perform the mitzvah of ושמחת בחגך, and it was only discussed in kabbalah sefarim. In later generations, the fear isn't as intense in people's hearts as it used to be, and therefore, more sefarim revealed that a tremendous judgment transpires on Hoshana Rabbah. What will happen in the year is largely dependent on this day.

Reb Shlomo Zalman explains that one aspect of the awesome judgment of Hoshana Rabbah was revealed to the average man. The Mishnah states, בחג נידונים על המים, "Succos we are judged for rain," and the Levush writes, "Therefore, people light more candles in the beis medresh on Hoshana Rabbah, similar to Yom Kippur because it is the final day of judgment for rain." It was always known that Hoshana Rabbah was a day of judgment for rain. In later generations, it became known that it is also a day of judgment for all areas of life.

Reb Shlomo Zalman adds that in the past, rain meant life. If it didn't rain, people would die from thirst. Today, things have changed because governments maintain water reservoirs, and water can be transported if

During World War II, the Yidden of Yerushalayim made a *kabbalah* to improve how they say *Amen yehei shmei rabbah*. They began saying it with all their might and with *kavanah*. When the Nazi general, Rommel *ym's*, was in Mitzrayim, intending to bring his army to Eretz Yisrael, Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiler zt'l told his *gabai*, "I sense that the *resha'im* won't be able to conquer Eretz Yisrael because the Yidden improved how they recite *Amen yehei shmei rabbah*." And indeed, the Yidden of Eretz Yisrael were miraculously spared.

38. 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 Hoshana Rabbah."

needed. [The Chazon Ish ruled that we don't fast for rain anymore because a lack of rain isn't as tragic as it used to be.] Therefore, years ago, it was sufficient for people to know that they were being judged for rain, and this would arouse them to *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, and *tzedakah*. Today, that isn't enough. Therefore, the sefarim revealed more details of the awesome judgment of this day.

The Halichos Shlomo (Succos, p.241) brings down Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's customs on this day. "From the beginning of the night, Reb Shlomo Zalman had immense fear, similar to the fear of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. From nightfall, he spent most hours of the night saying Tehillim with a lot of kavanah. Also in his elder years, he would get out of bed several times on this night to say Tehillim. He didn't appreciate it when people visited him on that night. When someone came, he would speak with him very briefly, and as soon as the conversation was over, he returned to his Tehillim."

Two yungerleit were schmoozing on Hoshana Rabbah night in the beis medresh of Reb Avraham Elimelech of Karlin zt'l. The rebbe rebuked them, "I am certain you have something very important to discuss because otherwise you wouldn't discuss it tonight. However, you would have been better off had you discussed these matters during Kol Nidrei than to speak on this holy night."

Shemini Atzeres

The Midrash says that after seven days of Succos, Hakadosh Baruch requests us to celebrate one additional day. Hashem says, קשה עלי פרידתכם, "It is hard for Me when you leave." The Imrei Emes writes that the feeling should be mutual and Bnei Yisroel should also feel that it is difficult to part from the Yomim Tovim.

According to some opinions and some siddurim, Shemini Atzeres isn't referred to as a חג (see *Shulchan Aruch* 668). The Rema MiPano explains that one literal translation of חג is a circle. All yomim tovim are a chag, a circle,

surrounding a primary, focal point. The focal point is Shemini Atzeres. The other yomim tovim are called חג because they are like circles going around the middle point, which is Shemini Atzeres.

This idea can be likened to a chasunah. At a wedding, there is a chuppah, dancing, and a meal, but the purpose of it all is for the chasan and kallah to go home and build a life together. The Sfas Emes says that the yomim tovim represent various stages of a chasunah. For example, the *schach* on the *succah* resembles the chuppah. After the chuppah is the *yichud*, an even greater unity, and it occurs on Shemini Atzeres.

It states in Mishlei ליום ויהי לבושה ותשחק ליום אחרון. The Vilna Gaon zt'l explains: עין is Rosh Hashanah because Hashem judges us with His might. ויהי refers to Succos, the day we take a פרי עץ הדר. And then comes Shemini Atzeres, ותשחק ליום אחרון, a day of immense happiness.

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

The Chasam Sofer zy'a teaches that Shemini Atzeres is greater than Yom Kippur because Yom Kippur is to love Hashem through affliction (fasting, etc.). In contrast, Shemini Atzeres is to love Hashem through joy, which is a more ideal way of connection, as it states (Shir HaShirim 7:7) מה יפית ומה נעמית אהבה, "How beautiful it is when the love is with pleasure and joy."

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

The Yesod Yosef writes, "The custom is to take all the *sifrei Torah* out of the *aron*

kodesh... Because when a father loves his son, he opens all his treasures for him and doesn't withhold anything. Similarly, Hashem bestows upon us immense goodness."

The *Zohar* states, "On Hoshana Rabbah, the judgment is completed, and the blessings begin. On the following day (Shemini Atzeres), the Jewish nation celebrates with the King and receives blessings for the entire year. Only the Jewish nation is present at that celebration, and when one sits alone with the king, whatever he asks will be granted." The final words reveal the unique strength of tefillah on Shemini Atzeres. "When one sits alone with the king, whatever he asks for will be granted."

Reb Chaim Palagi *zt'l* teaches, "Be extremely careful with the *tefillos* of Shemini Atzeres to say them with immense *kavanah*... There is no better day and greater *eis ratzon* than this day when Hashem desires to hear our *tefillos*.... Everything depends on this day."

The Kotzker *zt'l* said that on Shemini Atzeres is 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 said that on Shemini Atzeres, it is crucial to daven with a minyan because, on this day, it is decreed how much *parnassah* one will receive the coming year. This is hinted at in the words *והיית אך שמה*, which the Gemara says refers to Shemini Atzeres and whose final letters spell *הת"ך*, the name of the malach appointed over *parnassah*.

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

Bring Succos Home

There's a tefillah one recites when he *gezegens* (takes leave) from the succah (on Shemini Atzeres, or in Eretz Yisroel, on Hoshana Rabba), and it is printed in many siddurim and machzorim. In this prayer, we say, "It shall be Your will

that the malachim associated with the succah and the four minim should come with us into our homes..." We don't leave mitzvos behind. We take the blessings and spirituality we gained from these mitzvos and extend them to the entire year.

The *piyut* of Shemini Atzeres (מעריבת לשמ"ע) 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 Shinover Rav *zt'l* asks:

Wouldn't it be more appropriate for the *piyut* to write, "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 Shinover Rav *zt'l* answers that we ask Hashem to listen to the prayers of those who take the lessons and kedushah of the succah with them, even when they return to their homes.

Chazal (Succah 28:) note that the words *בסוכות תשבו* are contradictory because *סוכות* is a temporary dwelling and *תשבו* means to live permanently. Chazal answer that this *הקש* (juxtaposition of two ideas) teaches us to live in the succah in a permanent manner. The Gemara explains, "If he has beautiful vessels or sheets, he should bring them to the succah. He should eat and drink and spend time in the succah..." He should live in his temporary abode in a permanent manner.

Based on the concept of *אין הקש למחצה*, when two ideas are juxtaposed in the Torah, the *drashah* goes both ways, the Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* taught that we should also live in our homes, as we lived in the succah. Many attained holy and uplifting thoughts when they performed the mitzvah of succah. They should live in their permanent homes as they lived in the succah.

The Gemara (*Gittin* 56) defines a *בריה קלה* as "an insect that eats but does not produce waste". *קלה* means to take in and not give out. The Gemara (*Avodah Zorah* 3) refers to *succah*

as a מצוה קלה, a light and easy mitzvah. Reb Avraham Yehoshua Freund of Nasod zy'ahy'd explained that *succah* is called מצוה קלה because one should take in the light and holiness of the *succah* and never let it leave him.

It states (*Tehillim* 60:8) ועמק סוכות אמדד. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l says that סוכות אמדד refers to the measurements of a succah. The measurements equal 360 tefachim (as we will explain), and 360 is approximately the number of days in a solar year. ועמק סוכות אמדד implies that the measurements of the succah spread holiness to the entire year. Each day of the year receives sanctity from the mitzvah of succah.

How does a succah have 360 tefachim? Also, why does the succah hint to 360 days and not to a full year of 365 days.

Let us first answer the first question. How do we know that a succah is 360 tefachim? We are calculating the size of the tallest succah, which is twenty amos high. Each amah is six tefachim, and $20 \times 6 = 120$. A succah needs three walls, so the equation is $20 \times 6 \times 3 = 360$ tefachim, indicating that the succah brings kedushah to the 360 days of the year.

Five days are missing from this number because five days a year can exist without the kedushah of succah. These are the five days between Yom Kippur and Succos. On these days, we have atonement from all our aveiros, and therefore, these days don't need to receive the kedushah from the succah.

These ideas are alluded to in the pasuk we mentioned. It states אלקים דיבר בקדשו אעלוה. אחלקה שכם ועמק סוכות אמדד. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l translates it to mean, אלקים דיבר בקדשו, Hashem says, אעלוה, I rejoice with the five days from Yom Kippur until succos. אחלקה, and I divide these five days, שכם, from the 360 days of the year. They are not calculated like the rest of the year, because on these days we are clean from all aveiros. ועמק סוכות אמדד, I measure the measurements of the succah, and they are 360, indicating

that from the succah comes holiness for the entire year.

Rebbe Yissacher Dov's son, Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt'l, added that this is the intention of the pasuk (*Tehillim* 39:6), הנה מנחת נתינת ימי, the days of the year receive their spirituality from מנחת, the tefachim of the succah.

Simchas Torah

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

The Shalmei Chagigah (p.292: printed year תק"י) writes, "Fortunate is the person who rejoices with the Torah on Simchas Torah for this will rectify his soul for the times that he disgraced the Torah. Additionally, there's a guarantee from early scholars that whoever is happy with the Torah on this day will have offspring who will always study the Torah. There was a Rav who was very happy on Simchas Torah, and his descendants were renowned scholars for three consecutive generations. Everyone knew it was because of his happiness with the Torah on Simchas Torah. He rejoiced and danced with the Torah in a way that wasn't done by other Rabbanim and gedolei Yisrael. Despite his prestigious Rabbinic position, he would jump and dance before the Torah and encourage others to do the same." In this merit, he merited children and grandchildren exceptional talmidei chachamim.

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

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

The Satmar Rebbe zt'l danced with all his strength on Simchas Torah, although he was weak. When people questioned him about this, he replied, "Chazal (Succah 48.) say, שמיני, עזרת רגל בפני עצמה היא³⁹." On Shemini Atzeres, everyone receives another רגל (foot) to help him dance.

Dancing with the Torah on Simchas Torah is mesugal for having children. The Yismach Yisrael zt'l derives this from *Michal*, who was upset with her husband Dovid Hamelech when she saw him dance with all his might before the aron hakodesh (see Shmuel 2, 16:23). She was punished that she couldn't bear a child. We understand from this that when one does the opposite and is happy with the Torah, he will be rewarded with children.

A member of our *chaburah* didn't have children. One Simchas Torah, he danced with all his might with the Torah, and nine months later, he had his first child. The following Simchas Torah, he did the same, and nine months later, he had his second child. He had a friend who also didn't have children. When the friend heard that his friend had two children in the merit of dancing before the Torah, he wanted to do the same. He was embarrassed to dance with all his might in the beis medresh where he usually davens, so he went to an old-age home where no one knew him, and he danced up a storm and honored the Torah immensely. Nine months later, his first child was born.

Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l said in his father's name, Rebbe Shalom of Belz zt'l, "I can't tell you what the hakafos are about. But I can tell you this: 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 a prayer with כל עצמותי, all one's limbs."

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

The Chida teaches that by dancing on Simchas Torah, we bring down the iron walls that separate us from Hashem.

The Rebbe Rayatz of Lubavitz zt'l repeated 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 is precious, for on those days we can draw buckets of spiritual and material bounty. We get these by dancing."

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

After Simchas Torah

The twelve days that follow Simchas Torah are special. Reb Chaim Palagi (*Sefer Chaim siman 36*) writes, "It's the custom of chassidim to be cautious with their thoughts, speech, and deeds during these twelve days [following Simchas Torah], for they correspond to the twelve months of the year. The righteous stay home on these twelve days and review what they studied. This is a great *segulah* to receive Hashem's *siyata dishmaya* every day of the year – from the beginning of the year until the end. He will succeed with everything he does, whether in Torah, chassidus, or business."

In the Yom Tov *tefillah* we say, והנחילנו ה', אלקינו...מועדי קדשך, "Hashem gave us as an inheritance...the holy *yomim tovim*..." An inheritance, the Sfias Emes said, is something that remains forever. It isn't something that leaves after a few days. So too, the holidays

39. Literally, this means Shemini Atzeres is its own holiday, not a continuation and final day of Succos.

should always stay with us, even after the holiday is over.

A chassid of the Beis Aharon of Karlin zt'l returned home after spending a *yom tov* with his Rebbe. People asked him, ווי אזוי איז אריבער די יום טוב, "How did the *yom tov* pass?"

The chassid replied, די יו"ט איז נישט אריבער. די יו"ט איז אריין, "The *yom tov* didn't pass. It entered." The *yom tov* became part of him.

Once, after *yom tov*, Rebbe Dovid of Tolna zy'a asked one of his chassidim how he planned to get home. The chassid replied, "The goy that drove me here will take me back."

The Rebbe said, "You're returning with the same goy?" We shouldn't go back after *yom tov* with "the same goy" that arrived. The *yom tov* should change us; we should become new people.

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

A king had a beloved only daughter. When the time came for her to marry, a matchmaker proposed, "I have an ideal match for your daughter. He resides far away, but he is a prince, the son of a great king. He is wealthy and possesses all the qualities one could desire."

The king agreed to the match, and his daughter got married. Not long after the wedding, the groom expressed his desire to live in his homeland. His wife didn't want to move so far away from her father, but it meant a lot to her husband, so she consented.

Upon arriving in the foreign land, she discovered that the matchmaker had deceived them. Her husband was not a king's son, nor was he affluent. It was all a charade.

To make matters worse, her husband was cruel to her. He didn't conduct himself like a prince, raised with good manners. He behaved like the crudest, most unrefined individuals.

One day, they received a letter from the king. "I miss you dearly, and since you aren't visiting me, I've decided to undertake the long journey to visit you." The king wrote the day he expected to arrive.

The husband hired a crew of workers to clean and decorate his house to make it appear princely. He also began treating his wife kindly so the king wouldn't suspect anything was the matter.

The king was overjoyed with what he saw. He was pleased that he had selected the perfect husband for his daughter.

As the king prepared to return to his palace, his daughter realized that this was her last chance to reveal the truth to her father. When they were alone, with tears streaming down her face, she revealed to her father that her husband was not a king's son and had been treating her cruelly.

The Dubno Magid's *mashal* ends here, but some add in one more line:

The king told his daughter, "I will live in this city, close to you, and then your husband will always treat you well."

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

But then we reach *Ne'ilah*, and the King is about to leave, the Yid cries to Hashem and says, "I suffer so much from my body. When You visit, the body acts nicely to me, but now that You're about to leave, I must tell You that the body is cruel to me and tries to draw me to sin..."

As we wrote above, some add to the *mashal* that the king found a solution for his daughter. He would live near his daughter, so his son-in-law would always be kind to

her. For the nimshal, Hashem says, "Build a *succah*, and I will live together with you. In my presence, the body won't disturb you. And even after yom tov, you can take the

atmosphere of the yom tov with you, and I will remain with you. In My presence, the body will not prevent you from serving Hashem."

בס"ד

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