



THE AARON EDITION

SUKKOS

תשפ"ז

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לע"נ • נח רפאל ז"ל בן ר' יוסף חיים הכהן • ישראל ז"ל בן ר' ישעיה הלוי

Lechteich B'Sukkah 2.0

The Tur תרכ"ה asks the famous question:

The Torah tells us why we sit in a sukkah:

לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בַּסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם.

We sit in the sukkah, in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer brought in Sukkah 11b, to remember the Ananei HaKavod, the Clouds of Glory, with which Hashem surrounded Klal Yisrael when they left Mitzrayim.

But there is an obvious question. Klal Yisrael left Mitzrayim in Nissan. That is when the Ananei HaKavod first appeared. If Sukkos commemorates those clouds, why do we celebrate it six months later, on the fifteenth of Tishrei?

Many answers are given, but the Vilna Gaon offers a *pshat derech avodah* that can change our entire approach to the mitzvah of *yeshivas Sukkah*:

(שיר השירים א, ד וע' בהגהות בדפוס הרב קוק אות 260)

Yiddishkeit is not necessarily about celebrating what happened first, the initial breakthrough. We celebrate what lasts. What makes an impact. What remains with us.

Says the Gaon, the Ananei HaKavod that we celebrate on Sukkos are not simply the clouds that appeared when Klal Yisrael left Mitzrayim.

Because those clouds left.

After the Chet HaEgel, Klal Yisrael

lost the Ananei HaKavod. They had fallen terribly, and the special manifestation of the Shechinah that had surrounded them departed.

Moshe Rabbeinu went back up to Har Sinai and began pleading with Hashem on behalf of Klal Yisrael. He begged for forgiveness.

But Moshe wanted more than forgiveness.

He wanted the relationship back.

Moshe said:

וּבָמָה יֵדָע אֶפְאוּ כִּי מִצָּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲנִי
וְעַמֶּיךָ

How will it be known that we have truly found favor in Your eyes?

הֲלוֹא בְּלִכְתֶּךָ עִמָּנוּ.

By You going with us.

Moshe wasn't satisfied with Hashem saying, in effect, You're forgiven. Move on.

He wanted *בְּלִכְתֶּךָ עִמָּנוּ*.

We are a Lechteich nation. We don't travel alone. We need the Eibeshter. Moshe pleaded: We can't move forward without You.

Come back with us. Let Your Shechinah once again rest among us. Restore the closeness that we lost.

Moshe continued pleading until Hashem accepted his *tefillos*. He then went back up to Har Sinai for the final forty days. Those forty days culminated on Yom Kippur, when Moshe descended

with the second Luchos and Klal Yisrael received Hashem's forgiveness.

But the story didn't end on Yom Kippur.

The next day, the 11th of Tishrei, Moshe commanded Klal Yisrael regarding the building of the Mishkan. On the 12th and 13th, Klal Yisrael brought their donations. On the 14th, the craftsmen took the materials and began their work.

And then came the 15th of Tishrei.

The Ananei HaKavod returned.

The Gaon explains that this is why Hashem established Sukkos specifically on the fifteenth of Tishrei. We aren't simply remembering the original Ananei HaKavod that surrounded us when we left Mitzrayim. We are celebrating the חזרת ענני הכבוד, the return of the Ananei HaKavod after the Chet HaEgel.

When Moshe completed the Mishkan, he gave Klal Yisrael a beracha:

יְהִי נָעִם ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כֹּנֵנָה
עָלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵינוּ כֹּנֵנָהוּ.

The Gaon explains that אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ as a *tefillah* that the Shechinah should once again rest upon Klal Yisrael.

Klal Yisrael didn't just receive a clean slate after the Chet HaEgel. The relationship was restored to the point that Hashem once again wanted להשרות שכינתו בתוכם, to rest His Shechinah among them.

That is what we celebrate on Sukkos.

RAV MOSHE STERNBUCH, IN בִּיאורֵים פֶּרֶשֶׁת אֶמּוֹר, וְהַנְהוּגָה, elaborates on the Gaon and takes the idea a step deeper.

When Klal Yisrael originally left Mitzrayim, they had gone מעבדות לחירות, from slavery to freedom. Suddenly, there was no Pharaoh standing over them. No master telling them what to do. They could feel: *We're free now. We can make our own decisions. We can do whatever we want.*

And tragically, that wasn't merely a theoretical concern.

The Chet HaEgel showed just how quickly a nation that had left the control of Pharaoh could lose its sense of being under a Master. Moshe Rabbeinu was gone. They felt lost and untethered. And they turned to the Egel.

They had left מצרים עול. Now, when they were faced with uncertainty, there was no Pharaoh telling them what to do. They were free men, free to make whatever decision they felt was right at that moment.

Even if that meant replacing the Hashem Who had just split the sea for them with a golden calf.

It's hard to imagine that Klal Yisrael consciously believed this was the purpose of everything they had just experienced. Hashem had revealed Himself to the world in a way that had never happened before. They had seen the *makkos*. They had walked through the

*Moshe wanted more than forgiveness.
He wanted the relationship back.*

Yam Suf. They had stood at Har Sinai and heard Hashem Himself proclaim:

אָנכי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ.

And yet, they fell.

They knew Hashem was there. But in that moment of confusion, they failed to take that knowledge and live by it. They failed to live with the ironclad awareness that Hashem is Melech. That no matter how dark things become, how mysterious His ways may seem, or how hidden He may feel, we are never on our own.

We are always under His supervision. He is always holding us. He cares for us more than we can understand.

They thought freedom meant being on their own.

Then, on the fifteenth of Tishrei, the Ananei HaKavod came back.

And now they learned what freedom really means.

Freedom isn't living without a Master. Freedom is living with Hashem as your King.

You are free from the need to control everything. Free from having to have all the answers. Free from believing that everything depends on you.

It is knowing that wherever you go, whatever uncertainty you face, you are never alone. Hashem is leading you, watching over you, and carrying you through.

We have just spent weeks living with עול מלכות שמים. Elul. Rosh Hashanah. Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. Yom Kippur.

It feels like such a long journey. Back

in the summer, when school was about to begin, Yom Kippur felt forever away.

And then it happens.

Neilah ends. We break our fast. We made it. There is almost a natural feeling of relief: *Okay. Back to normal life.*

But the Vilna Gaon teaches us that this is precisely when Hashem chose for us to celebrate the Ananei HaKavod.

Not in Nissan, when the first clouds appeared, but on the fifteenth of Tishrei, when the clouds came back.

After the Chet HaEgel. After Yom Kippur. After forgiveness. After the relationship had been restored.

And Rav Moshe Sternbuch takes it one step deeper. Precisely when we are ready to move on, Hashem says: No. Don't go. Stay with Me.

Come into the sukkah. Come back under the clouds. Take everything you just experienced and learn to live with it when life goes back to normal.

Because that is where all of this was heading.

אַתָּה הָרָאָתָ לְדַעַת כִּי ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אֲיֵן עוֹד מְלַבְּדוֹ.

Toward knowing that even when we are free, we are never on our own. Even when we cannot see what comes next, we are never truly in the dark.

We have the Eibeshter.

We live beneath the דמהימנותא, surrounded by His presence.

This was Moshe Rabbeinu's summation, in just two words, of what Klal Yisrael needed after the Chet HaEgel (Shemos 33:16):

בְּלִיָּתָךְ עִמָּנוּ – *You going with us.*

When the Ananei HaKavod returned, that closeness was restored. And every year, when we sit in the sukkah,

we return to that same message:

Hashem, we want You with us. We don't want to take a step without You. Lechteich. Walk with us.

Daled Minim: Shaken Up

Shaking the lulav and esrog might seem puzzling to someone unfamiliar with the practice. Yet as Yidden we understand that every mitzvah, no matter how obscure it may appear, has a higher purpose.

Rav Meilech Biderman sheds light on some of the deeper, hidden elements of this mitzvah, helping us appreciate its spiritual significance and how it connects us to Hashem in profound ways.

The Midrash Rabbah 30:9 relates:

פרי עץ הדר, זה הקדוש ברוך הוא שכתוב בו (תהלים קד, א): הוד והדר לבשת. כפת תמרים, זה הקדוש ברוך הוא שכתוב בו (תהלים צב, ג): צדיק כתמר יפרח. וענף עץ עבת, זה הקדוש ברוך הוא, דכתיב (זכריה א, ח): והוא עמד בין ההדסים. וערבי נחל, זה הקדוש ברוך הוא, דכתיב ביה (תהלים סח, ה): סלו לרכב בערבות ביה שמו.

The fruit of a pleasant tree” – this is the Holy One blessed be He ... “Branches of date palms” – this is the Holy One blessed be He ... “A bough of a leafy tree” – this is the Holy One blessed be He ... “Willows of the brook” – this is the Holy One blessed be He...

It's absolutely incredible! When we shake the *daled minim*, the Midrash

tells us that, *k'v'yachol*, we are holding Hashem in our hands!

Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zt”l* interprets the passuk “ה' לי לא אירע” – *Hashem is with me, I shall not fear*” with a unique twist. He explains that this is an allusion to Sukkos. When we perform the *na'anuim* we have Hashem literally with us in our hands, and at this time, when we are even physically so close, we have nothing to fear.

Another famous symbolism in the *daled minim* is found in the midrash in Vayikra Rabba 30:14:

רבי מני פתח (תהלים לה, י): כל עצמתי תאמרנה ה' מי כמוך, לא נאמר פסוק זה אלא בשביל לולב, השדרה של לולב דומה לשדרה של אדם, וההדס דומה לעין, וערבה דומה לפה, והאתרוג דומה ללב.

Rabbi Mani began: “All my bones will say: Lord, who is comparable to You” (Psalms 35:10) – this verse is stated only for the sake of the palm branch. The spine of the palm branch resembles the spine of a person, the myrtle resembles the eye, the willow resembles the mouth, and the citron resembles the heart.

The Shevet Mussar writes that just as

a dried-out esrog or lulav – which, as we learned in the Midrash, represents us – is invalid for the mitzvah, so too must we serve Hashem with vitality and freshness, rather than in a spiritually “withered” state. When used correctly, the *minim* serve as a segulah for invigorating our *avodas Hashem* with renewed life and enthusiasm.

The Chidushei HaRim explains that shaking the *minim* is like shaking a person to awaken them from sleep. By shaking these species, we symbolically awaken our souls to spiritual awareness and growth. On Shabbos, however, we don’t take the *daled minim*, as this act is unnecessary; Shabbos itself naturally awakens our spirituality.

Reb Shimon Deutsch, the Imrei

Shefer, who was the prime disciple of the Chasam Sofer, writes about his rebbi’s deep love for the mitzvah of the *daled minim*. He shares that the Chasam Sofer cherished this mitzvah so much that he would hold the *daled minim* throughout the entire tefillos of Sukkos. The Chasam Sofer felt that holding them significantly enhanced his kavanah during davening, to the point that his kavanah on Sukkos even surpassed that of Yom Kippur.

Let us recognize the incredible opportunity we have while shaking the *daled minim*. In this sacred act, we are, metaphorically, holding Hashem in our hands, and invigorating ourselves for His *avodah* for the rest of the year.



Esrog: Embracing Bumps To Connect Hearts

The Arizal teaches that the esrog is like a person’s heart. The *sefarim hakedoshim* tell us that having a bumpy esrog is considered a *hiddur*, an extra glorification of the mitzvah. Doesn’t this sound ironic? Why should we have a bumpy esrog to represent the pure, “smooth” heart of a Yid?

Rabbi Moshe Weinberger explains:

While our ears may simply hear words, it’s our hearts that truly understand the unspoken feelings of humanity. Our hearts can process the pain and

struggles of others, motivating us to step out of our comfort zones, to flex and extend ourselves limitlessly for the sake of others.

However, the key to doing this for others lies in recognizing the pain, challenges, and vulnerability within our own hearts. Only when we acknowledge and understand our own struggles can we genuinely empathize with others and respond to their needs with true compassion.

It’s by embracing the unique bumps in

our own hearts that we open the door to connect with the hearts of others.

That's why having a bumpy esrog isn't just okay; it's like making the mitzvah even more special. The more we accept our own bumps, the better we can understand and help others with theirs. The esrog, like our hearts, shows the importance of this timeless value.

Rav Chaim Greineman, a *talmid* of the Chazon Ish, relates the following story he heard from a venerated Yerushalmi *posek*, who carefully selected the finest *daled minim*. They were assisting with an affordable sale in Bnei Brak for *talmidei chachamim*, and although the items were not the most exquisite, they were still *mehudar*. To save time, the local *poskim* decided to answer only specific questions.

A man with a Russian appearance approached them, apologizing for his lack of specific questions due to the language barrier. He shared his background of growing up in a place where Judaism was suppressed, leaving him with limited knowledge. He had chosen several sets of *daled minim* based on their appearance and asked the rabbis for guidance.

One rabbi agreed to inspect the *daled minim* chosen by the Russian man and his sons. To his astonishment, the first esrog he examined was flawless, and the second was even better. The third esrog was equally perfect. Perplexed, he showed them to the other rabbis, who also marveled at their quality. Impressed, the rabbis informed the Russian man, "These *daled minim* are of the highest quality."

The first rabbi then examined the *lulavim* chosen by the Russian man, and all three were splendid and in excellent condition. He couldn't believe how someone unfamiliar with the details had found such exceptional specimens.

Curious, he asked the Russian man how he had managed to choose such fine *daled minim*. The man replied that he had spoken to God before coming, expressing his love and recounting his past struggles with a lack of knowledge and the freedom to practice Judaism. He had asked God to choose the *daled minim* for him.

As mentioned, the esrog helps us connect to hearts; however, at times, the heart also connects us to the esrog.



Simchas Bais Hashoeva

The Simchas Beis Hashoeva, a celebration during Sukkos, was a truly magnificent spectacle. It involved the greatest *talmidei chachamim* and

tzaddikim singing and dancing before Hashem in Yerushalayim. A special juggling act added to the tremendous joy. The Mishnah in Sukkah 51a tells us that



one who didn't witness this never saw true happiness:

מי שלא ראה שמחת בית השואבה, לא ראה
שמחה מימיו... חסידים ואנשי מעשה היו
מרקדין בפניהם באבקות של אור שבדיהם,
ואומרים לפניהם דברי שירה ותהילה.

Rashi points out that expert jugglers could juggle eight fiery torches at a time, vividly illustrating, *זו ומקבל זו, וזורק זו, וזורק זו ומקבל זו* – *and one tosses this and receives that, and one tosses this and receives that.*

While many explain the greatness of this celebration and why it is the happiest event one can witness, I'd like to focus on the significance of the juggling act. What made it special? Why did Rashi feel compelled to provide such a vivid description of juggling, something we all can imagine ourselves?

We can answer based on the teaching of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who offered an enlightening explanation in a Sukkos address in 1957 (5718).

Juggling serves as a metaphor for the journey of life and the pursuit of genuine joy. In our fast-paced, demanding, and often chaotic modern world, we all find ourselves juggling various responsibilities and obligations, akin to keeping multiple balls in the air.

However, in Yiddishkeit, we're not just juggling everyday mundane duties; we're juggling the torches of our souls. As it says in Mishlei 20:27, "נר ה' נשמת אדם" – *the soul of man is a flame of God.* There is no such thing as mundane or casual in Yiddishkeit. Everything is for a greater purpose.

Juggling symbolizes the need to elevate our souls periodically, freeing them from the earthly burdens and anxieties that can weigh us down. It's about allowing our souls to reconnect with their Divine source, experiencing moments of intimacy with ourselves, Hashem, and our inner truth.

As Dovid Hamelech writes, "השליך עולך" – *cast your burden on Hashem, and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous man collapse.*

Sometimes life can be overwhelming. But we must not forget who we are doing it all for – Hashem. He is the One we are working for, the One who gave us the tasks, and the One who can lighten the burden. We are all jugglers, and sometimes we need to halt. Throw it up to Hashem. Rashi depicts exactly what juggling is, so in the moments we forget, we remember to toss this burden and receive that peace, *menuchas hanefesh*. Recalibrate and refocus.

