

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

### Covenant & Conversation

*A thought for Sukkot from the Koren Sacks mahzor*

**O**f all the festivals, Sukkot is surely the one that speaks most powerfully to our time. Kohelet could almost have been written in the twenty first century. Here is the ultimate success, the man who has it all -- the houses, the cars, the clothes, the adoring women, the envy of all men -- who has pursued everything this world can offer from pleasure to possessions to power to wisdom and yet who, surveying the totality of his life, can only say, in effect, "Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless."

Kohelet's failure to find meaning is directly related to his obsession with the "I" and the "Me": "I built for myself. I gathered for myself. I acquired for myself." The more he pursues his desires, the emptier his life becomes. There is no more powerful critique of the consumer society, whose idol is the self, whose icon is the "selfie" and whose moral code is "Whatever works for you." This is the society that achieved unprecedented affluence, giving people more choices than they have ever known, and yet at same time saw an unprecedented rise in alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders, stress related syndromes, depression, attempted suicide and actual suicide. A society of tourists, not pilgrims, is not one that will yield the sense of a life worth living. Of all things people have chosen to worship, the self is the least fulfilling. A culture of narcissism quickly gives way to loneliness and despair.

Kohelet was also, of course, a cosmopolitan: a man at home everywhere and therefore nowhere. This is the man who had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines but in the end could only say, "More bitter than death is the woman." It should be clear to anyone who reads this in the context of the life of Solomon, that Kohelet is not really talking about women but about himself.

In the end Kohelet finds meaning in simple things. Sweet is the sleep of a labouring man. Enjoy life with the woman you love. Eat, drink and enjoy the sun. That ultimately is the meaning of Sukkot as a whole. It is a festival of simple things. It is, Jewishly, the time we come closer to nature than any other, sitting in a hut with only leaves for a roof, and taking in our hands the unprocessed fruits and foliage of the palm branch, the

citron, twigs of myrtle and leaves of willow. It is a time when we briefly liberate ourselves from the sophisticated pleasures of the city and the processed artefacts of a technological age and recapture some of the innocence we had when we were young, when the world still had the radiance of wonder.

The power of Sukkot is that it takes us back to the most elemental roots of our being. You don't need to live in a palace to be surrounded by clouds of glory. You don't need to be rich to buy yourself the same leaves and fruit that a billionaire uses in worshipping God. Living in the sukkah and inviting guests to your meal, you discover -- such is the premise of Ushpizin, the mystical guests -- that the people who have come to visit you are none other than Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives. What makes a hut more beautiful than a home is that when it comes to Sukkot there is no difference between the richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor. We are all strangers on earth, temporary residents in God's almost eternal universe. And whether or not we are capable of pleasure, whether or not we have found happiness, nonetheless we can all feel joy.

Sukkot is the time we ask the most profound question of what makes a life worth living. Having prayed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to be written in the Book of Life, Kohelet forces us to remember how brief life actually is, and how vulnerable. "Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom." What matters is not how long we live, but how intensely we feel that life is a gift we repay by giving to others. Joy, the overwhelming theme of the festival, is what we feel when we know that it is a privilege simply to be alive, inhaling the intoxicating beauty of this moment amidst the profusion of nature, the teeming diversity of life and the sense of communion with those many others with whom we share a history and a hope.

Most majestically of all, Sukkot is the festival of insecurity. It is the candid acknowledgment that there is no life without risk, yet we can face the future without fear when we know we are not alone. God is with us, in



Take Control of  
**YOUR MONEY!**  
[tinyurl.com/ffitness5](http://tinyurl.com/ffitness5)

...probably the best personal  
finance training course I've seen! - CPA

**TORAS AISH IS A WEEKLY PARSHA  
NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL  
AND THE WEB AT WWW.AISHDAS.ORG/TA.  
FOR MORE INFO EMAIL YITZW1@GMAIL.COM**

The material presented in this publication was collected from email subscriptions, computer archives and various websites. It is being presented with the permission of the respective authors. Toras Aish is an independent publication, and does not necessarily reflect the views of any synagogue or organization.

**TO DEDICATE THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE CALL  
(973) 277-9062 OR EMAIL YITZW1@GMAIL.COM**

the rain that brings blessings to the earth, in the love that brought the universe and us into being, and in the resilience of spirit that allowed a small and vulnerable people to outlive the greatest empires the world has ever known. Sukkot reminds us that God's glory was present in the small, portable Tabernacle Moses and the Israelites built in the desert even more emphatically than in Solomon's Temple with all its grandeur. A Temple can be destroyed. But a sukkah, broken, can be rebuilt tomorrow. Security is not something we can achieve physically but it is something we can acquire mentally, psychologically, spiritually. All it needs is the courage and willingness to sit under the shadow of God's sheltering wings.

I wish you all a Chag Sameach and continued blessings for the year ahead. *Covenant and Conversation 5777 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org*

### **RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

**"**In order that your ensuing generations will know that I had the People of Israel live in sukkot when I took them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God" [Lev. 23:43]. One of the most colorful and engaging holidays of the Jewish year is Sukkot. Growing up, my children looked forward to this festival more than to any other – despite the interrupting rains we often endured in Manhattan during the Israeli harvest season.

Indeed, there is a great deal of pageantry in building and living in a new habitation for an entire week: the earthy greens and yellows of the vegetative ceiling (s'chach) from whose openings we must be able to see the sky, the magnificently decorated make-shift walls emblazoned with fruits and vegetables, colorful depictions of Holy Temple celebrations bringing together past glories and future hopes, and the renderings alluding to our special sukkah guests, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David.

Beyond the spectacle, however, what is the

message of this mitzvah of dwelling in the sukkah?

This question is especially important when you consider that according to Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk, this mitzvah must be performed with specific intention and understanding, based on the Biblical verse: "...in order that your ensuing generations will know that I had the People of Israel live in sukkot when I took them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God" [Lev. 23:42-43].

I believe we can find an answer by looking at the curious Talmudic case of the person who feels discomfort in the sukkah [Sukkah 26a]. Generally speaking, we do not find discomfort serving as the basis for an exemption from a Biblical mitzvah. Sukkah is the notable exception, with Jewish law defining discomfort as the wind or the flies making it impossible to sleep in the sukkah, or rain spoiling the soup you are about to eat in the sukkah [Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayyim 640:4].

What is it about the mitzvah of sukkah that renders it incompatible with discomfort?

If, as Rabbi Akiva famously maintains [Talmud, Sukkah 11b], the sukkah symbolizes the desert huts in which the People of Israel dwelt in the desert, there must certainly have been uncomfortable invasions by desert creatures and a pounding hot sun that would have made sitting in such a sukkah incredibly uncomfortable. Nevertheless, so did the People of Israel live for forty years.

Only if we maintain, like Rabbi Eliezer [ibid.], that the sukkah represents the Divine clouds of glory that protected and accompanied the people throughout the long desert sojourn, impervious to any foreign element of annoyance, would it make sense to rule that one who is uncomfortable need not sit in our sukkot today.

I would like to suggest, however, that we might view these two opinions not as being in disagreement, but rather as providing complementary perspectives. That is to say, even if the sukkot in the desert were actual make-shift huts whose occupants were vulnerable prey to all the hazards of difficult desert living conditions, if those who lived in them felt that they were living under Divine protection, they were impervious to discomfort.

I believe that this is the message of the Holy Zohar: "It was taught to the nations of the world that anyone who has a share in our holy nation and our holy land will dwell in the shadow of Divine faith and receive the sacred guests who will bring joy in this world and in the world to come" [Emor, 2:78].

Whether your sukkah is a silo or a sanctuary depends on whether or not you feel that your nation and your land are under the loving protective covering of the Divine, come what may.

It is told that Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev would sit in the sukkah and continue to eat, sing and

study Torah even during the worst rain storms. One of his disciples cited the halakhic principle: "If rains fall, one must (leave the sukkah) and go into the house... Anyone who is freed from the commandment of sukkah (because he is uncomfortable) and still does not leave it, will not receive any reward; he is considered a commoner (Greek, idiot)" [Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayyim 639].

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak countered: anyone dwelling under the Divine Rays of Splendor who can nevertheless feel uncomfortable is truly a commoner!"

Perhaps the deepest message of the sukkah is that true joy and comfort stems not from a fancy palatial residence replete with expensive oak furnishings and chandeliers, but rather from familial love and togetherness within the backdrop of our Biblical guests and under the protection of a loving God.

As the Talmud teaches, "When our love was strong, we could lie on [an area as small as] the blade of a sword, and there was sufficient room; now that our love is no longer strong, a bed of 60 cubits (90 feet / 27 meters) is not large enough" [Talmud, Sanhedrin 7a].

©2017 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

#### RABBI BEREL WEIN

## Wein Online

**A**fter the tension filled solemnity of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the holiday of Sukkoth arrives with its many inspiring rituals and its message of joy and rejoicing in the service of God. It is regarding Sukkoth that the Torah instructs us "to be joyful on your holiday."

Now, joy, like almost all other emotions is not something that can be turned on and off like a faucet. A person either feels joyful or not. You cannot tell a person who is sad and depressed to just feel joyful and expect that that should somehow happen. The traditional commentators have already remarked that since we have just passed through the cleansing processes of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and feel relieved, forgiven and confident in our faith and in our relationship to our Creator, it is only natural to expect that we will feel joyful at this time of the year.

But, to a certain extent, this type of answer really only begs the question. It is quite difficult for anyone to feel completely satisfied with one's self and one's actions after undergoing a thorough, honest and often painful self-examination. We are now privy to our faults and failings and even though we are confident that Heaven's goodness has forgiven us, we are still well aware of the problems that remain within us and limit, if not even prevent, any feelings of overwhelming joy to take hold. And yet the Torah insists that we be joyful and of good cheer on this holiday of Sukkoth.

The rabbis have given a markedly different perspective to the emotion of joy and it is this perspective that I feel the Torah is speaking of when

commanding us regarding the holiday of Sukkoth. The rabbis in the Talmud stated that there is no joy comparable to the joy one feels when doubts have been resolved and clarity and reality reign.

Much of the sadness that exist in life is based on its uncertainty, in the plethora of options and choices, the consequences of which are never clear to us and in the difficulty we face in placing our lives and their events into proper perspective. A flash of clarity, an insight of perspective, a moment of confident decision can truly bring about a feeling of joy.

Sukkoth can provide us with that clarity and perspective. It teaches us that our physical home and house is not quite as important as we may think it is. It instructs us in the beauty of nature, the necessity for Heaven's blessing of rain and productivity and in the realization that even though our lives and existence are indeed fragile, we should treasure every breathing moment and see it in the perspective of our immortality and eternity.

Sukkoth engenders within us the appreciation of correct priorities in our lives and the achievement of a proper balance between the illusory and reality. It provides us with a most necessary dose of humility -- one that can allow a person to see things in proper perspective.

The Jewish people throughout our long and many times difficult years and experiences have always realized that we are living in a sukkah. That realization alone was sufficient to allow individual Jews and Jewish society generally to function, survive and even prosper. By absorbing this lesson of the sukkah -- its beauty, its fragility, its temporary nature, its serenity and its relationship to nature and the world we live in, we immerse ourselves in God's perspective, so to speak, of the world and our place in it.

That alone should awaken within us an emotion of joy and satisfaction. In Temple times, the libation of water on the holy altar of the Temple in Jerusalem on the holiday of Sukkoth created a national emotion of joy and rejoicing. It is interesting to note that water, which most of us take for granted, is not nearly as expensive a commodity as an animal sacrifice or an offering of gold or silver would have been. Nevertheless, it was the offering of water that occasioned the the great celebrations of joy in ancient Jerusalem.

Simply because it was almost a relatively mundane offering, it emphasized the perspective of life that Sukkoth was meant to convey. One can be joyful even with plain water if one realizes the blessings of nature and of the benevolence of God. In a world of excess and the pursuit of luxuries, Sukkoth comes to remind us of our true priorities and of the necessity of a healthy balance in our lives and behavior. ©2017 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other

products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

**RABBI AVI WEISS**

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**T**here is a common thread throughout the Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, Hoshana Rabbah and Simchat Torah festivals--a thread that binds our people.

Note the four species we take as the Sukkot holiday begins. Each represents a different kind of Jew. But for Rabbi Jacob Riemer the most important part of the lulav and etrog is what he calls the thingamajig, or the agudah, the strip that binds the lulav together. Without that strip a lulav and its parts would separate, making it impossible to take as one as described in the Torah.

Hoshanah Rabbah adds a similar dimension. After all, of all the species the arava seems least important. It is the one without smell or taste, symbolic of the person without good deeds or knowledge. Still it is the arava and none of the others that play the central role on Hashana Rabba, teaching that every individual, even the seemingly less important play a crucial role in the fabric of our nation.

At the center of Shemini Atzeret is the prayer for geshem--rain. The mystics note that water by definition teaches the message of togetherness. There is no one molecule of water that can exist alone. Hence the Hebrew word for water is only in the plural--mayim.

All this reaches its crescendo on Simchat Torah, the holiday of ending and starting the Torah--much like a circle that knows no beginning or end. Thus on Simchat Torah we dance in circles--the knowledgeable with the less knowledgeable, the committed with the less committed, the secularists with the religious, those on the political right with those on the left. On Simchat Torah were all on the same plane. All together.

It's an important concept especially in these days when our people and our land face such serious challenges. The only way we can overcome is if we remain as one with everyone playing a role.

Years back, at the first Soviet Jewry conference in Brussels, a young Argentinean spoke of how lonely he felt as a Jew in Buenos Aires. In those days, the sixties, the fascists ruled Argentina; Hitler's picture could be seen everywhere. The young man went on to say that at the conference he began learning the Hebrew language. He learned that the smallest letter was the yud, or the pintele yid. But, he continued, if one writes a second yud near the first it spells Gods name. Two Jews together reflect the unity of God, and no matter how small each may be, together they can overcome everything.

That's what this young man felt at that conference--a sense of unity which made him believe that our people would prevail. And it's that sense of

unity that we desperately need during these trying times. ©2017 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

**RABBI YISROEL CINER**

## Parsha Insights

**T**he Talmud [Avodah Zarah 9A] teaches that the world as we know it will exist for six thousand years. The time designated for the Moshiach {Messiah} is somewhere after the year 4,000 but before the year 6,000. Each thousand corresponds to a day of the week. Upon the completion of the six thousand years, the world will enter a totally different stage of existence, corresponding to the Sabbath. As we stand in the year 5,761, less than a quarter of a 'day' remains. Just as the tempo on Friday increases as the Sabbath draws close, reaching a feverish pitch on the last quarter of the day, the events that have presently engulfed Israel represent the frenzied preparations needed for the world to ready itself for its ultimate state.

In order to obtain a clearer perspective on the recent events we must first gain a better understanding of the purpose of galus {exile} in general. Rav Dessler, in his classic Michtav Me'Eliyahu, explains in the following way.

The essence of galus is that the Shchinah {Hashem's holy presence} is in exile--that holiness and spirituality seem to be subordinated. When we are exiled to a place where the truth is trampled upon, serving Hashem seems to be unimportant and inconsequential. Those who insist on such 'archaic practices' are the objects of derision. The mission of Klal Yisroel is to remain strong in our belief and implementation of that belief and not be influenced and deterred by the contrary environment surrounding us.

Those who stand firm in their commitment to Torah, recognizing it as the sole purpose of creation and ticket to eternity, while viewing the 'success' of society as superficial and transient, have 'passed' the test of galus, have been elevated through it and in turn elevate the entire world.

The need for exile dates back to the very beginning of man's odyssey. Adom Harishon {the first man}, before he sinned, was on the level of the Garden of Eden. He clearly saw spirituality as the only true reality and physicality as nothing more than a cloak attempting to obscure it. By sinning, he and the entire world were thrust into a state of concealment where physicality appears as reality. The odyssey of mankind, that became the lot of Klal Yisroel, is to first bring the world back to the state of Adom Harishon prior to his sin and then catapult it even higher to its ultimate perfection.

The deadline for this process is 6,000 years--the vehicle used is galus.

Each galus presented its own unique difficulties and challenges. However, the common thread is the opportunity and responsibility to see through the smoke screen of nature and the physical and to recognize the truth/reality.

The tikun {correction} first began on an individual basis with the Forefathers and then was transformed into a national task upon the seventy souls who descended to Mitzrayim {Egypt}.

Mitzrayim, our first galus, was an environment of intense spiritual involvement with the forces of impurity. Sorcery, demonism and contacting the dead were their means of subjugating nature to their whims and desires. Our not changing our names, language and mode of dress showed our rejection of that society and its norms.

The odyssey continued with receiving the Torah followed by the sin of the Golden Calf. The building of the First Beis Hamikdash {Temple} and its destruction and subsequent Galus Bavel {Babylonia}. The building of the Second Beis Hamikdash, Galus Yavan {Greece}, its destruction and our present galus of Edom.

The sin which led to that destruction was baseless hatred with haughtiness at its root. You're not competing with me and you're not trying to hurt me. Nevertheless, your very existence eats me up. This haughtiness leads to chutzpah--no embarrassment at all. Who are you to tell me what's right or wrong? Alternative lifestyles...

Whereas the galus of Mitzrayim at least had a connection to spirituality, the galus of Edom is all crass, sensual physicality. Technology allows seemingly complete mastery over nature, increasing the haughtiness with the sense of absolute control.

The final stage of this galus finds us returning to our land, yet the galus of the Shchinah {Hashem's holy presence} is still being perpetrated, but this time by our own people. It's difficult to quote such a thing but the Vilna Gaon wrote that at the time before Moshiach, the control of Israel will be in the hands of descendants from the mixed multitude that joined up with us as we left Mitzrayim. Their motto will be "The strength of my hand has brought me this" and the name of Hashem will be conspicuously absent from their litany.

This will be the final testing stage before Moshiach. Those who fight against the Torah will haughtily lay claim to all successes. They will attempt to disseminate heresy and contempt for the spiritual. We returned to the land. We fought for it. We control it. Who's Hashem? The test, Rav Dessler concludes, will be to see through the farce of "our strength" and focus our energies on seeing the clarity of Hashem's Hand through serving Him.

The odyssey continues. The rulers, with smug complacency, plan a secular revolution, attempting to tear down the remaining religious fibers which weave

their way through society. The complacency is shattered.

The only way to bring peace is to be at peace with our mission in life. With that, the clarity of the Garden of Eden will again shine and the entire world will recognize His light.

As this Friday night's prayers state: Blessed are you Hashem, Who spreads the Succah of peace over us, over the entire nation of Israel and over Yerushalayim. ©2017 Rabbi Y. Ciner and torah.org

**RABBI DANIEL STEIN**

## TorahWeb

**A**ccording to Chazal, both of the mitzvos that we perform on the holiday of Sukkos, taking the daled minim, the four species, as well as dwelling in the sukkah, represent achdus, unity. The Medrash compares the esrog, which has an appetizing taste and a pleasing aroma, to Jews who possess both Torah learning and the performance of mitzvos; the lulav, the date palm, which has a positive flavor but no fragrance, to those Jews who have Torah learning but lack good deeds; the hadasim, the myrtle, which has fragrance but no taste, to Jews who perform mitzvos but lack the learning of Torah; and the aravos, the willow, to those Jews who lack both Torah learning and as well as good deeds. During Sukkos we bind all of these species together to underscore the necessity of uniting all Jews together under the mutual banner of serving the Ribbono Shel Olam. Similarly, the Gemara (Sukkah 27b) derives from the pasuk "Every citizen in Yisrael shall dwell in sukkos" (Vaykira 23, 42), that all of the people of Israel could theoretically dwell in one sukkah for the sukkah need not be owned by those sitting within it. Undoubtedly, all of Klal Yisrael inhabiting one sukkah, coexisting under the same roof for seven consecutive days, would be a powerful statement of unity, and achdus.

However, in actuality these two symbols of achdus, correspond to two distinct forms of unity. In Parshas Vayechi, Yaakov Avinu twice summons all of his children before his death, "Gather, and I will tell you what will happen to you at the end of days. Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisrael, your father" (Breishis 49, 1-2). The Sfias Emes explains that Yaakov beseeched his children to gather together in a show of unity two times, corresponding to two discrete types of achdus. There is the achdus of individuals who don't necessarily enjoy each other inherently, however, they share a common goal and agenda which breeds a bond born out of convenience and expediency. Much like siblings who gather sparingly only to honor their parents. This is the unity being described in Yaakov's latter plea "Gather and listen, sons of Yaakov, and listen to Yisrael your father." However, in Yaakov's first call for achdus, which provided no further context other than a directive to "gather", he was hoping for a deeper

and more profound kind of unity, which is the aspiration of every parent. He was yearning for the genuine achdus of loving siblings, who sincerely like each other, and for whom honoring their parents is not an anchor, but a pretext, or an excuse to see and spend time with each other.

The Chofetz Chaim observes that even though the daled minim signify the virtue of achdus, the esrog is not tied together with the other minim, and is generally held in a different hand from the other species. It only joins with the other species in order to perform and fulfill the mitzvah of daled minim. Therefore, while the mitzvah of daled minim represents unity, it is the type of achdus generated by those who possess a shared and collective goal, and unite expressly for that purpose. Whereas the achdus of the sukkah is entirely different. All of Klal Yisrael can theoretically sit in one sukkah but there is certainly no mitzvah to do so. When many Jews choose to sit in the same sukkah together, they are bound together not by a communal obligation or common objective, but rather by a mutual fondness for one another. Rav Dov Weinberger (Shemen Hatov) suggests that the Arizal and the Shelah Hakadosh advised to take the daled minim in the sukkah each morning of Sukkos in an attempt to fuse these two notions of achdus together.

(However, see Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, Mikraei Kodesh (Sukkos Vol. 2 Sec. 20-21) and Rav Herschel Schachter, Nefesh Harav (pg. 217) who raise certain objections to this practice.)

While we long to forge an honest and adoring relationship with one another, we also desire for that relationship to be grounded in a unified vision, mission, and purpose. Even the most loving relationships that are not founded in substance and shared beliefs can become temperamental and indecisive. We aspire to engender a genuine affection among all Jews and to reinforce that friendship with a harmonious resolve and determination to serve Hashem.

Despite the fact that both the sukkah and the daled minim remind us of the different strands of achdus, neither mitzvah calls for absolute uniformity, in fact they both allow and even lobby for diversity. Within the achdus of the daled minim there seems to be a pecking order and each species has its own assigned seat. The esrog is held in the right hand while all of the other species are in the left hand. The lulav is in the center and rises above the rest. The hadassim are positioned on the right of the lulav, but must be shorter than the lulav and taller than the aravos. The aravos should be on the left of the lulav and cut to be the shortest species in the bundle. How can a symbol of unity and togetherness be so rigidly segregated? Moreover, the Gemara (Sukkah 28a) derives from the very same pasuk, "Every citizen in Yisrael shall dwell in sukkos", which previously emphasized the universality of the sukkah, that women are exempt from the mitzvah

of sukkah. How can the sukkah, which is purported to be a bold symbol of inclusivity, have exceptions or exclusions? Rav Yitzchok Menachem Weinberg, the Tolna Rebbe (Heimah Yenachamuni) explains that the sukkah and the daled minim teach us that true achdus must never come at the expense of legitimate diversity, but rather demands that we find common ground and build relationships despite our differences.

In fact, Yaakov Avinu seems to undermine his own impassioned appeal for unity amongst his children, by subsequently blessing each one of his children differently, as the pasuk states "each man according to his blessing he blessed them" (Breishis 49, 28), potentially sowing the seeds of jealousy and resentment in the future. For this reason, the pasuk concludes, "he blessed them", which according to Rashi was meant to convey that all of the children were included in each one of the blessings. What then was the purpose of giving each their own individualized berachah in the first place? The Imrei Emes cites the Chiddushei Harim who suggests that Yaakov was training his children to realize that accentuating their individual roles and abilities, should never be an obstacle to unity, but the very foundation upon which genuine achdus must be built. Only when we appreciate and celebrate the differences that inherently exist between us, can we begin to form the bonds of true achdus and join together properly in the service of Hakadosh Baruch Hu! ©2017 Rabbi D. Stein & TorahWeb.com

#### **RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ**

## **Shabbat Shalom Weekly**

**T**he Torah tells us in Leviticus 23:40 a special commandments for Sukkot -- to take the arbah minim, the Four Species (etrog, lulav, hadassim, and aravot). We wave them in the four directions of the compass as well as up and down. The symbolism of the waving in all directions is to remind us that God is everywhere. However, why are these four species designated for the mitzvah?

Our rabbis teach that these four species are symbolic of four types of Jews: the etrog (citron) which has a fragrance and a taste represents those Jews who have both Torah wisdom and good deeds; the lulav (date palm branch) which has a taste (from the dates), but no fragrance represents those Jews who have Torah wisdom, but no good deeds; the hadassim (myrtle branches) have a fragrance, but no taste representing those Jews who have good deeds, but no Torah wisdom; and lastly, the aravot (willow branches) have neither a taste nor a smell representing those Jews who are lacking in Torah wisdom and good deeds.

What do we do on Sukkot? We symbolically bind together and recognize every Jew as an integral and important part of the Jewish people. If even one is

missing, the mitzvah is incomplete. Our People is one; we must do all we can to bind together the Jewish people and work to strengthen the Jewish future!

© 2017 Rabbi K. Packouz and aish.com

### **RABBI YAAKOV WOLBE**

## **Bais Hamussar**

"In a Sukkah shall you dwell for seven days' -- The Torah is instructing us to leave our permanent dwelling and move into a temporary dwelling." (Sukkah 2a). A mere five days after Yom Kippur, we are instructed to abandon our permanent home and move into a makeshift hut and live there for seven days. The question can be raised:

On Yom Kippur we successfully gained selicha and mechila and have been cleansed from all traces of sin and imperfection. What about our character is yet imperfect that we must fix with the mitzvah of the Sukkah?

The Mashgiach suggested an approach to explain this mitzvah and indeed many other elements of the Yom Tov of Sukkos. There is one element of our lives that is not fixed by Yom Kippur: The world with its obfuscation of the Almighty (the Mashgiach on occasion mentioned that the word "Olam" -- world -- is etymologically linked to "Heelem" meaning obscuring), that acts as a barrier between us and Him, and is liable to evoke the Yetzer Hara and sin. In contrast to the dictum of Rabbi Yaakov in Pirkei Avos -- This world is akin to a corridor before Olam Haba -- we are likely to ascribe a degree of permanence, and absolute value to this world. We are wowed by the exploits of the Gentiles, and perhaps even assume that "nature" is an entity independent of the Almighty. Sukkos is the festival that shatters these notions.

Of course, the Torah does not eschew this world and this existence; it does not promote asceticism or monasticism, however, we do not view this world as an end unto itself, rather as a means to assist us in our true aim, avodas Hashem. To reinforce this point we are instructed to abandon our climate controlled homes and move into a rickety gazebo and live there for a week. Certainly we recognize that the Sukkah is a temporary residence, but as we are sitting in it and exposed to the elements, perhaps it is worthwhile to glance over at our "permanent" house and ask ourselves if there is truly any difference between the two. Indeed, the sukkah is home for seven days and perhaps the house is home for seventy years, but in comparison to Olam Haba they are identical. Both are just different degrees of temporality, but neither are truly permanent. In doing so, we can successfully dismantle the last of the barriers that separate us from our Creator.

This theme is strung throughout the Yom Tov. The Midrash notes that the Daled Minim (Four Species of the Lulav) hint at the Name of Hashem. Though we

may be engaging with various items that grow from the ground, ostensibly products of nature, we remind ourselves that nature does not exist outside of Hashem. On Shabbos Chol HaMoed we read Koheles which is oriented around the futility and temporality of this world.

We also read about the humbling of the seventy nations (in the Haftorahs of the first day and Shabbos Chol HaMoed) to remind us that what we ascribe permanence to is also on a collision course with the destiny to be brought to their knees before the Almighty.

A story is told about a wealthy businessman who was travelling through Radin, and he came to visit the Chofetz Chaim in his home. He was shocked at the impoverished conditions that the Chofetz Chaim lived in. It was very sparsely furnished and everything was simple and bare. He asked the Chofetz Chaim where his furniture was. The Chofetz Chaim countered, "where is your furniture?" My furniture? What do you mean? It's in my mansion in Vienna. So why don't you have it here? I'm travelling! Who brings their furniture when they're travelling? So the Chofetz Chaim said, I'm also travelling.

My "furniture" is waiting for me in my ultimate home. This is my temporary home. When we sit in our temporary home on Sukkos let us remember that our "permanent" home, and indeed us as we are currently constituted with a body sheathing our neshama, are really only temporary as well. © 2017 Rabbi Y. Wolbe & aishdas.org

### **ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT**

## **A Hybrid Etrog**

*Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit  
by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

The Etrog is a very delicate fruit. In order to strengthen it so that it can last a longer time, people created Hybrid Etrogim or they mixed two types of breeds together, in this case the Etrog and the bitter orange, to create a stronger and long lasting fruit. Our sages in general forbade this "Etrog Murkav" for the following reasons:

1. The fruit is not authentic if it is a Hybrid.
2. Even if it is not hybrid it is still a combination of two fruits.
3. Even if we except the reasoning that there is enough of Etrog in the mix to make it kosher, in an Etrog that is exactly the minimum requirement, this second fruit would minimize the required amount needed for a kosher Etrog.
4. The very essence of the pure Etrog is minimized because of the additional fruit.
5. There are situations that the actual making of a Hybrid fruit would be prohibited therefore creating a situation that The Mitzva of Etrog would be accomplished by transgression.

Those sages who permit a hybrid Etrog offer

the following explanations:

1. The Torah never specifically uses the term Etrog but rather the words "A fruit that is beautiful" (Pri Etz Hadar"). Thus they claim a "Etrog Murkav" is also beautiful.

2. The Etrog combined by the two fruits looks exactly like an Etrog.

3. The addition of the additional fruit does not serve to annul the actual authentic Etrog.

4. The hybrid Etrog does not apply to doing a Mitzva even if it is a prohibition with regard to sacrifices.

The question of the hybrid Etrog is indeed complicated and is an interesting subject to delve into during the holiday of Succot. As well, one can find an exhaustive analysis on the subject in the Encyclopedia Talmudit. ©2016 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

#### RABBI LABEL LAM

### Dvar Torah

I merited a unique peak behind the scenes a few years back that helped to concretize an old idea that I had been carrying around for some time. It was one of those rare snowy winters in Jerusalem. A remarkable eighteen inches fell in one day, and the most beautiful city was ever more elegant dressed in white.

Early the next morning was a feast for photographers. A friend of mine pointed out something I may have otherwise missed. The wet snow weighed down the large leaves of the palm trees, and there it was in the center, like a finger pointing to the heavens was a single LULOV.

Click! I took a picture and gained an insight. The letters of the word LULOV can be deconstructed into two words, LO- To Him (HASHEM) LEV-is Heart. This is the essence of what we hope to accomplish by taking the four species on Sukkos to dedicate, to point our hearts heavenward.

Each of the species, our sages tell us, represents a different organ of human anatomy. The Esrog resembles the heart, the Lulov- the spine, the Hadassim the eyes and the Aravos the lips. Not only is the year a new year but so are we. Therefore after begging for life on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur we step out onto the soil of a brand new year with more than symbols picked from the garden of our inspiration, with a new heart filled with fresh feelings of devotion, and new spine focusing our newly found direction and with a clean eyes and pure lips with which to see and express ourselves.

The Mishne in Tractate Sukkah tells us that a Lulov that is stolen or dry is no good. A Lulov has to be yours as prescribed by the verse, "And you should take for yourself on the first day..." If it is somebody else's devotion that we are emulating and it is not our own then it is lacking in authenticity. If it is dry, a mere leftover from last year, a frozen institutionalized

remnant or a souvenir of better years it doesn't qualify.

The Mishne continues to inform us that if is from a tree that was worshipped or a city that indulged in idolatry it is also invalid. If our new found inspiration emanates from a decrepit source, that also disqualifies it.

If the head is chopped off or the leaves removed it is invalidated. If the leaves are spread apart, a little scattered that OK but Rabbi Yehuda says that we should bind them from above. If we are acting without our heads altogether impulsive or compulsive or in a way that we are divorced from our source, those are sufficient grounds to disqualify but if our problem is a lack of focus that's normal and passable but Rabbi Yehuda says, "Get it together!" We can learn an awful lot from its laws and its natural pose, but Most of all we can learn to love from the LULOV. ©2004 Rabbi L. Lam & torah.org

#### YITZ WEISS

### Divine Embrace

One of the themes of Sukkot is to recognize that G-d is our protector. We go out of our permanent homes into a temporary dwelling and expose ourselves to the elements. In so doing we recall that G-d was our guardian when we left Egypt into the desert and remains our protector today.

The minimum requirement for a kosher sukkah is not four walls, but two walls and a tefach (a handbreadth). If we were to construct a sukkah based on the minimum, we would really be exposed to the elements! Two walls and a bit don't seem to offer much protection! How are we to feel secure?

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l compares the sukkah measurements to an arm: two "walls" - i.e. from the shoulder to the elbow, and from the elbow to the wrist, and a tefach - the hand. Rav Auerbach says that sitting in the sukkah one is literally in the embrace of G-d!

May this year be one where we see the protection of G-d on a daily basis and the coming of Moshiach! Have a great yom tov! *This dvar torah was told by Rabbi Aaron Cohen in Cong. Tifereth Israel, Passaic, NJ*



<http://www.theholidayspot.com/sukkot/>