



The Path To Follow

SHABAT SUKOT

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Report it to the Dayanim of the City

If a person sees that a sinner is among those evildoers and scoffers who detest individuals that reprimand them, as it is written, "Do not rebuke a scoffer, lest he hate you" (Proverbs 9:8), and there is no chance that he will heed admonishment (and instead can easily repeat his transgressions, and will very likely sin again), then this person should report it to the dayanim of the city. They can then punish him so that he guards himself from doing what is forbidden in the future.

– The Chafetz Chaim

THE MONTH OF TISHRI IS COMPLETELY PROTECTED FROM ACCUSERS (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

It is fitting to think about why the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us to make a sukkah immediately following Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. If we say that He wanted us to make a sukkah during a time of rain, when people are usually inside their homes, so that everyone would recognize that we are doing this for the sake of the mitzvah, then why did He tell us to make a sukkah after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur rather than before? We also need to explain the words of the holy Zohar, which states that the Holy One, blessed be He, silences the Satan during the festival of Sukkot and does not give him permission to accuse. Why does He close his mouth on Sukkot? We know that Hashem does this on Yom Kippur in order to prevent him from accusing Israel during a day that is completely holy and which procures atonement for sin. However the festival of Sukkot is a festival of joy, when sins are not even considered.

Who Will Not Fear the Lion's Roar?

The haftarah for the second day of Sukkot deals with the inauguration of the first Temple, which was built by King Solomon. He inaugurated it during the festival of Sukkot, as it is written: "They gathered before King Solomon, every man of Israel, for the festival in the month of Ethanim, which is the seventh month" (I Kings 8:2). We need to understand why King Solomon inaugurated the Temple on the festival of Sukkot, rather than during Passover or Shavuot, when the Torah was given. What connection exists between the inauguration of the Temple and the festival of Sukkot?

Concerning the verse, "The lion has roared. Who will not fear?" (Amos 3:8), the Sages have explained that the word aryeah ("lion") is formed from the initials of Elul, Rosh Hashanah, Yom HaKippurim, Hoshanah Rabba (see Shelah, beginning of tractate Rosh Hashanah).

Whoever seeks the truth and wants to return to Hashem will immediately regret his misdeeds and repent when he hears this roar, for who is the person who will hear the roar of the lion and not fear? This is because Hashem is closer to us on Tishri than on any other month of the year, and it is easier to appease the king when he is nearby. In fact Hashem approaches, as it were, the Jewish people during the month of Elul, and anyone with the slightest bit of intelligence will immediately begin to repent and perform good deeds in order to successfully emerge from the judgment of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

The Holy One, blessed be He, Who is merciful and generous, holds no accusations during the great and awe-inspiring day of judgment. Regarding that time, the verse states: "Blow the Shofar at the moon's renewal, at the time appointed for our festive day" (Psalms 81:4). In other words, the Holy One, blessed be He, the King of kings, renews and hides Himself before the Satan in order to prevent him from accusing the Children of Israel. Where does He hide from him? He approaches us and reveals Himself in order to forgive us. At that point the Satan waits for the King to enter into judgment, and the Children of Israel sound the Shofar while he waits for Him there. The Satan then flees from this sound, and the mouth of the accuser is closed. Although he has not succeeded in accusing on Rosh Hashanah, he still possesses the sins of the Children of Israel. However starting from Rosh Hashanah they begin to diminish, for the Jewish people have repented and regretted their sins,

and they are all erased. Hence there remains nothing for them to be accused of, for all these accusations are incomplete.

While the Satan is looking at the sins of the Children of Israel and awaiting the start of the judgment in order to accuse them, before the holy day of Yom Kippur, and even on Yom Kippur itself, he does not receive permission to accuse them or open his mouth to the slightest degree. The day itself procures atonement for sins, as our Sages said in the Gemara: "The numerical value of haSatan is 364, meaning that on 364 days he has permission to accuse, but on Yom Kippur he has no permission to accuse" (Yoma 20a). On Yom Kippur the Holy One, blessed be He, forgives the sins of the Jewish people on account of the sanctity of the day, even if they have not completely repented.

Given that the heart of every Jew is filled with dread during the Days of Awe, since nobody knows whether or not he will be found innocent and inscribed in the book of life, Hashem knows that the Children of Israel are liable to become discouraged. Now since the Shechinah does not reside amid sadness (Shabbat 30b), He gave us the festival of Sukkot immediately after Yom Kippur. We can therefore rejoice, eat and drink, for at that point we are certain that Hashem did not judge us harshly, and that everything He does is for the good.

Bakesseh: Same letters as Besukkah

We now understand why King Solomon inaugurated the Temple during the festival of Sukkot. It was in order to fulfill the saying, "The deeds of the fathers are a sign for their children." That is, just as King Solomon inaugurated the Temple during the month of Tishri, when the Holy One, blessed be He, is close to us, everyone is responsible for inaugurating his own house and preparing a dwelling for the Shechinah. In other words, he must repent in order for the Shechinah to dwell with him.

When does a person have the opportunity to prepare his home for the Shechinah to come and dwell there? It is when the Holy One, blessed be He, is close to us, namely in the month in Tishri. Hence He says, "My children! Make sukkot for after the days of judgment. Leave your fixed homes and come into a temporary dwelling, so that you may realize that your stay in this world is but a temporary one, and that your primary dwelling is in the World to Come. If you prepare yourself in the temporary dwelling, you can enter the permanent dwelling, as the Mishnah states: 'This world is like a corridor before the World to Come. Prepare yourself in the corridor so that you may enter the banquet hall' [Pirkei Avoth 4:16]."

We therefore learn that the festival of Sukkot is also an integral part of the Days of Awe, having a connection to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, when all the inhabitants of the world are judged. Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, hides Himself from the Satan on Rosh Hashanah, likewise He shuts the mouth of the Satan on Sukkot. The term bakesseh ("renewal") is formed by the same letters as besukkah ("in the sukkah"). This means that Rosh Hashanah is equal to Sukkot insofar as Hashem renews and hides Himself from the Satan and our accusers. Thus the verse states, "Sound the Shofar at the moon's renewal," for the entire month is hidden from the Satan, who cannot accuse the Jewish people.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

The Sukkah Comprises Torah and Faith

The Rema wrote, “Those who are vigilant begin building their sukkah as soon as Yom Kippur ends, in order to proceed from one mitzvah to another” (Orach Chaim 624:5). During Yom Kippur, faith is increased in the heart of man because he has confessed all his sins before the King of kings and asked for forgiveness. Hence it is a mitzvah to rely on faith, as well as on Torah study and mitzvot performance, these two being found in the mitzvah of sukkah – Torah and mitzvot together.

How? The mitzvah by its very self, and the Torah because a sukkah resembles the Beit Midrash that man makes in order for the Shechinah to dwell there. Although construction on the first Temple was completed in the month of Cheshvan, King Solomon inaugurated it in the month of Tishri, immediately following Yom Kippur, in order to tell us that everyone must do the same. Faith alone cannot endure when it is not accompanied by Torah, and Torah study can only occur when a person exiles himself, as it is written: “Exile yourself to a place of Torah” (Pirkei Avot 4:14). During Sukkot, each person leaves his home to enter a sukkah, which is like an exile. Our Sages have said in the Aggadah, “Why do we make a sukkah after Yom Kippur? In order to tell you that on Rosh Hashanah, the Holy One, blessed be He, judges all the inhabitants of the world and seals the verdict on Yom Kippur. Perhaps the Children of Israel were condemned to go into exile? In this way, they make a sukkah and are exiled from their homes into the sukkah, and the Holy One, blessed be He, considers it as if they had been exiled to Babylon.” From the fact that a person is exiled from his home – exiled to a sukkah, which is like a Beit Midrash – the decree is diminished.

Three Festivals, Three Principles

It is written, “Three times shall you keep a festival to Me in the year” (Exodus 23:14).

The festivals are designated in Scripture as being three in number, which teaches us both the uniqueness of each festival and the unity of all three of them, just as “a three-ply cord is not easily broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12). In general, when the Torah describes a grouping of three, it comprises the three foundations on which the worlds rests, like a table that stands on three legs: “On Torah, Divine service, and deeds of kindness” (Pirkei Avot 1:2).

The three festivals are also built on these three principles, which stabilize the world of Hashem’s servants: “On Shavuot we were given the Torah, on Passover the Jewish people cleaved to the Holy One, blessed be He, by means of the Passover offering (the lamb of the first Passover in Egypt and the Passover offering afterwards), and on Sukkot we have the principle of kindness, for the Jewish people unite in the mitzvah of the four species.

During the festival of Sukkot, we must maintain this triple point of view, which characterizes the three festivals. It comprises the principle of deeds of kindness, which sustains the lives of the people and the world, with the Torah and service of Hashem of the two other festivals.

– Binyan Av

The Name of the Festival

It is surprising that the festival of Sukkot is described by the plural term sukkot, since each individual must make a sukkah for himself. The name of the festival should therefore have been in the singular!

It is as the Sages have said: “In time to come the Holy One, blessed be He, will make a sukkah for the righteous from the skin of Leviathan, for it is said: ‘Can you fill his skin with barbs [sukkot]?’ [Job 40:31]” (Bava Batra 75a). Hence in order to allude to two sukkot – the first sukkah being the one in which we dwell in this world in order to fulfill the mitzvah of sukkah, through which we will merit the second sukkah, that of the skin of Leviathan in the future – the festival carries the plural form of the word: Sukkot.

– Shvilei HaBossem

So That Your Generations May Know

The festival of Sukkot is one of the most prestigious festivals of Israel, for it commemorates the Clouds of Glory.

This deals with the special honor that was accorded to the Jewish people. In fact the other festivals deal with deliverance and salvation, something that a father is obligated to do for his son in order for him not to be enslaved or suffer hunger. However the glory of the Children of Israel is revealed on the festival of Sukkot, insofar as they merited the Clouds of Glory. In order to commemorate this glory, the festival of Sukkot was instituted.

This allows us to understand why we do not commemorate the manna or the well that accompanied the Children of Israel in the desert. It is because they did not comprise anything new, for every father gives his son food and water, and the fact that this was done by means of a miracle is not something special for the Holy One, blessed be He, since nature and miracle are equivalent to Him. However we do commemorate the Clouds of Glory, which testify to the glory of the Children of Israel, for whom the Holy One, blessed be He, made a canopy of honor. Hence the Torah underlines, “So that your generations may know that I made the Children of Israel dwell in booths” (Leviticus 23:43), an important thing to know in order to recognize the greatness of Israel.

– Kol Yehudah

You Shall Dwell in Sukkot for Seven Days

The Midrash explains, “You shall dwell – meaning that you shall live there.” From here the Sages say, “All the seven days, one should make the sukkah his permanent abode and his house his temporary abode. How so? If he has beautiful vessels, he should bring them up into the sukkah; [if he has] beautiful couches, he should bring them up into the sukkah. He should eat and drink and pass his leisure time in the sukkah” (Sukkah 28b).

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were given to the Children of Israel so they could take it upon themselves to do the will of their Creator and guard themselves from sin.

Therefore once we received the commandment of these festivals, the Torah gave us the mitzvah of sukkah, to eat and drink in it, to live in it and even to pass our leisure time in it. Hence we take it upon ourselves to place the fear of G-d over us and all our deeds. In fact man’s essential role is to serve Hashem in this world, for in this way we can shine the light of mitzvot on material things as well.

– Divrei Chaim

One Who Suffers is Exempt

The mitzvah of sukkah grants tremendous merit that can save everyone who seeks shelters in it from all misfortune and illness. The Zohar delves into this subject at great length.

We also find an allusion to this idea in the Gemara: “He who suffers is free from the obligation of sukkah [min hasukkah]” (Sukkah 26a). In other words: He who suffers is free from his misfortune min hasukkah (“by the sukkah”). By the power of the mitzvah of sukkah, he is free from his misfortune.

This allusion also appears in the words of the Mishnah: “The sick and their caregivers are free from the obligation of sukkah,” meaning that by the merit of the mitzvah of sukkah, they are free from all sickness and “caregivers” for the entire year.

– Tiferet Shlomo

I Speak to Him in a Dream

One who sees an etrog in his dream, the Creator takes note of him.

One who sees a lulav in his dream has a single heart for our Father in Heaven.

One who sees a myrtle branch in his dream, his affairs will be successful.

One who sees a willow branch (arava) in his dream, his prayer will be pleasing (arev) to Hashem.

– Sefer HaLikutim

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

SOME TEACHINGS REGARDING THE FOUR SPECIES

The Zealous Perform Mitzvot as Soon as Possible

The time to take the lulav and the species occurs at the end of Shacharit on the day of the festival. As the Shulchan Aruch stipulates, “After the repetition of the prayer, we take the lulav and recite the blessing upon it.” The Tur indicates that the custom to rise early for synagogue on Sukkot stems from the fact that “the zealous perform mitzvot as soon as possible.”

The origin of this custom is found in the Gemara, which states: “This was the custom of the men of Jerusalem: When a man left his house he carried his lulav in his hand. When he went to synagogue, his lulav was in his hand. When he read Shema and his prayers, his lulav was still in his hand. However when he read in the Law or recited the priestly blessing, he would place it on the ground. If he went to visit the sick or to comfort mourners, he would go with his lulav in his hand. Yet when he entered the Beit Midrash, he would send his lulav by the hand of his son, his slave or his messenger. What does this teach us? It serves to inform you how zealous they were in the performance of religious duties” (Sukkah 41b).

For this reason, several Acharonim (the Magen Avraham, Sha’arei Tes-huvah, and others) have stated that it is fitting to take the lulav and other species as soon as possible, even before going to synagogue, and to shake them in one’s own sukkah while still at home. The Ya’avetz (the gaon Rabbi Yaakov Emden) also stated that he saw his father, the Chacham Tzvi, “rise early in the morning, go to the sukkah, and take the lulav with the blessing on all the days of the festival.” They held such views on account of the holy one of Israel, the Arizal. Others gave another reason for it, namely that shaking the lulav restores peace like a sacrifice. Now prayer replaces sacrifice, which is why it is fitting to take the lulav, which restores peace like a sacrifice, before prayer.

True, it follows from Rabbi Chaim Vital’s Sha’ar HaKavanot that it is better to take the lulav within the walls of the sukkah, but this must be done after the prayer of Shacharit. He writes, “It would be perfect if we prayed in the sukkah, to pray and take the lulav at the appropriate time, which is after the prayer of Shacharit, before Hallel.”

Performing the Mitzvah Immediately After the Blessing

With regards to the four species, the Poskim have stated that there are three ways of taking the lulav and etrog at the time of the blessing, such that the mitzvah is not fulfilled before we have finished reciting the blessing:

- 1) Take the lulav in hand and recite the blessing on the lulav and Shechey-anu before taking the etrog, and then proceed immediately to the performance of the mitzvah. The Shulchan Aruch mentions this custom (Orach Chaim 651:5).

- 2) Hold the etrog upside down, facing downwards (in the opposite way that it grows on a tree), until the end of the blessing. The Shulchan Aruch also mentions this custom (ibid.).

- 3) Have the intention, at the time of the blessing, not to fulfill your obligation until having completed the blessing. This custom is mentioned in Biur HaGra (651:15). He rules, according to his approach, that this is the best method of all. The Shulchan Aruch does not mention this custom, and the Taz gives the following reason: It is because this method, the intention of not fulfilling your obligation until completing the blessing, depends solely on the heart, and a person is liable to forget that he must have the necessary intentions in his heart because there is no action to remind him of it. Hence the Shulchan Aruch does not mention it. Furthermore, the author of Mateh Yehudah believes that it is impossible to cite this method in public, since not everyone knows the precise laws regarding intention when performing a mitzvah, and the Shulchan Aruch does not mention it. Nevertheless, one who is familiar with the laws regarding intention can act in this way.

The Bach writes, “Everyone now has the custom of holding the lulav in the right hand by simply holding the etrog upside down.” After a lengthy and thorough Halachic discussion of the subject, he notes that “in any case, it seems that to avoid any doubt, it is better to hold both of them upside down. This is the proper way to proceed.” On the other hand, the gaon Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer Zatzal writes in his book Kaf HaChaim that the most widespread custom is to take the lulav and recite the blessing, and then to take the etrog that we were holding in the left hand and to shake it.

Ensuring its Beauty

The Shulchan Aruch states, “We must join the etrog with the lulav for the shaking and to shake them together” (Orach Chaim 651:11).

The Midrash describes the allusions contained in the four species, which symbolize the Jewish community. The etrog, which possesses both good taste and fragrant odor, alludes to the tzaddikim, who possess both Torah and good deeds. The Midrash gives similar analogies for the other species. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: “Form yourselves into one group, like a single person, so that there are no leftovers among My children. If you do this, I will glorify Myself in you.” The Vilna Gaon states, “Consequently, they must be united like a single bundle when we take them and shake them.”

The Shulchan Aruch also states, “We must take the bundle in the right hand, with the head towards the top and the body towards the bottom, and the etrog in the left hand” (Orach Chaim 651:2).

The Gemara tells us why the lulav is taken in the right hand and the etrog is taken in the left: “The lulav in the right hand and the etrog in the left. Why so? The former constitutes three mitzvot [the palm, myrtle, and willow branches], while the latter only one [the etrog]” (Sukkah 37b).

The author of Akedat Yitzchak gives another reason why the lulav must be held in the right hand and the etrog in the left. It is because the etrog represents the heart, as in: “You shall love the L-RD your G-d with all your heart.” This is somewhat like the tefillin that we wrap around the left arm in order to be near the heart. Because of this, says the Akedat Yitzchak, it is fitting to pay particular attention to the beauty of the etrog, to its perfection and appearance. This is because the etrog alludes to the tzaddikim, who are perfect in their deeds, those who have good flavor and fragrant odor, meaning those who possess Torah and good deeds.

Do Not Hesitate on the Price

The great Torah figures of Israel exerted a tremendous effort and spent a great deal of money in order to fulfill the mitzvah of the four species in the best way possible. A disciple of the Arizal said of him: “To purchase what was needed for the mitzvot, such as the lulav, etrog, and the like, I saw that he agreed to whatever price the merchants initially requested. He did not refuse them. Sometimes he would place money before them and tell them to take what they wanted. He told me that we must not refuse [to pay the price] for mitzvot.”

The Kaf HaChaim cites the Zohar on Parsha Terumah, which states that a man should not recite the blessing on an etrog that he obtained for free. This is because the forces of impurity nourish themselves from mitzvot that are obtained for free. The book Bikurei Yaakov, in its introduction to the laws on the four species, goes to great length to stress that “one must pay great attention to the mitzvah of the four species, which allude to the four letters of the Great Name, and to honor Hashem with one’s money, without looking to save money in any way.” In his commentary on tractate Pesachim, the holy Shelach writes: “I have seen certain extremely pious individuals who love mitzvot and kiss matzot, maror, and all the mitzvot when the time comes to perform them. They also kiss the sukkah when they enter and leave it, as well as the four species of the lulav, all this out of their love for the mitzvot. Happy is the one who serves Hashem wholeheartedly and with joy.”

A TRUE STORY

THE ETROGIM THAT SAVED THE JEWS OF WARSAW

An atmosphere of worry and sadness hovered over the Jews of Warsaw. The absence of kosher etrogim for the approaching festival of Sukkot weighed heavily upon them, sapping the joy from their lives.

As we know, etrogim do not grow in Poland. Merchants would normally import magnificent and kosher etrogim from warm countries every year. This was not an easy thing to do, which is why etrogim were particularly expensive. However a love for the mitzvah outweighed all other considerations, financial or otherwise, and whoever had the means would make a tremendous effort to purchase a beautiful etrog for the festival of Sukkot.

The weather had been especially bad that year, which made it very difficult to grow etrogim. Since an etrog is very sensitive to temperature changes, this naturally resulted in an unusually small crop. In fact not a single kosher etrog could be found in the Jewish quarters of Warsaw.

During the prayers of Rosh Hashanah, the inhabitants of Warsaw beseeched the Almighty to look upon their sorrow and enable them to find beautiful etrogim for the festival, so they could use them to properly fulfill the mitzvah of the four species. In their hearts, they believed that the Holy One, blessed be He, would certainly not allow their great city to be without etrogim for the mitzvah of the four species.

Indeed, less than a month before the festival of Sukkot, a marvelous rumor spread across town in a flash. A Greek merchant had arrived on the Vistula River with a boat filled with beautiful etrogim. Not long afterwards, a crowd of Jews, both young and old, quickly made it to the banks of the river to cast their gleaming eyes upon the stalls filled with such highly coveted etrogim.

The cunning Greek merchant, however, quickly realized the great value of his merchandise. Thus with a haughty voice, he ordered the crowd to move away from the stalls and to come forward to purchase etrogim in small groups. In this way he could better control the situation.

The crowd, whose eyes glistened with joy at the sight of superb etrogim for which they yearned, was prepared to do everything the merchant said in order to have an etrog for the festival, which was not a small thing.

However their joy did not last long, for the first group of people wanting to purchase etrogim returned to town with great disappointment. "The merchant has gone mad," they murmured in disbelief. Apparently the cunning merchant had demanded a colossal price for each etrog, one equal to the price that a hundred etrogim sold for in the previous year.

Every effort made by the leaders of the Jewish community to convince the merchant to lower his price was useless. Even when they threatened to purchase only one etrog from him, he still refused to give in by lowering his price. From the desperate look that he saw in people's eyes, he believed that he could eventually sell all his etrogim for the price he wanted.

The leaders of the community therefore found themselves with a dilemma on their hands. Despite the exorbitant price of the etrogim, should they purchase only a few of them with public funds in order to perform the mitzvot with the entire community, or was it better to continue pressuring the merchant until he lowered his prices? They expressed their concerns to the Gerer Rebbe Zatzal, the author of Chiddushei HaRim, who was in Warsaw at the time.

The Gerer Rebbe, who was known for his keen insight, carefully listened to what the leaders of the community had to say, taking note of every detail. He then thought about it for a few moments, and eventually asked his faithful assistant to summon Rabbi Nachum and Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya, two well-known etrog merchants in town, for he wanted to discuss the situation with them.

The Rebbe's assistant obeyed his request, and the two etrog merchants were quickly summoned before the Rebbe. After speaking with him for a short time, the two merchants were seen leaving his office with a mysterious smile on their faces, a smile that concealed a great secret. When they were asked what the Rebbe had said to them, they didn't say a word.

On the morning prior to the festival of Sukkot, a new rumor began to spread in the streets of the city, a rumor concerning a new shipment of etrogim that had arrived in the stores of the two etrog merchants, Rabbi Nachum and Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya. People heard that they would open their stores at a certain time and furnish the community with an abundance of etrogim.

The residents of Warsaw were stunned, unable to contain themselves. They gathered around the stores of the two etrog merchants a few hours before the sale was to begin. In fact through the glass window, people could see large cases resting on layers of linen, where beautiful yellow etrogim could be seen.

Among the crowd gathered at the entrance of these stores was the Greek merchant. He had also heard this new rumor, and he rushed to see if there was any truth to it. When he saw the mountain of cases through the shop window, he turned as white as chalk. He realized that in a short while, his merchandise would be worthless. His heart was racing because he didn't have enough sense to lower his prices a little, which would have still earned him a fortune. What a shame!

The Greek merchant immediately announced that whoever would quickly purchase an etrog from him in the following hour, before the stores of the Jewish merchants opened, could do so at a symbolic price. In fact the price that he set for his etrogim was ridiculously low.

Hundreds of people quickly gathered around the stalls of the Greek merchant, who made no fuss this time. In fact all he cared about was getting rid of his merchandise as quickly as possible.

It was only when the last Jew in Warsaw had purchased a beautiful etrog that the merchant went away disheartened. The great intelligence of the Chiddushei HaRim had proven itself: The beautiful etrogim that people had seen through the store window of the two Jewish merchants, these "etrogim" had been carefully carved out of wood and painted yellow!