

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary
Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future

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Bernice and Irby Cooper
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Featuring Divrei Torah from

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Rabbi Yosef Bronstein

Rabbi Shmuel Maybruch

Ms. Leah Moskovich

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Symbolism and Rationale of Sukkot

Five days after the solemnity and intensity of Yom Kippur, Sukkot, the festival of joy and happiness, begins. The Torah describes the festival as follows:

דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי הַזֶּה חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לֵה'. בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ כָּל מְלֶאכֶת עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ ... אַךְ בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאֶסְפְּכֶם אֶת תְּבוּאֵת הָאָרֶץ תַּחֲגוּ אֶת חַג ה' שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן שִׁבְתוֹן וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי שִׁבְתוֹן.

Speak to the Jewish people saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the festival of Sukkot, a seven-day period for G-d. On the first day shall be a sacred holy day when you shall not do any laborious work ... On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the harvest of the land, you shall celebrate G-d's festival for a seven-day period; the first day is a rest day and the eighth day is a rest day:

Leviticus 23:34-39

A Time to Appreciate G-d's Benevolence

This festival is also known in the Torah as "*Chag HaAsif*," the Festival of Gathering,¹ because it is celebrated at the time of year when the harvested produce is brought from the fields into storehouses and homes. When a person gathers in the bounty of his land, he is naturally filled with tremendous joy and happiness. This happiness could easily turn into arrogance; it could make a person full



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of himself and his accomplishments and distance him from G-d and from others.² As Rashbam³ comments:

למען ידעו דורותיכם [וגו'] - פשוטו כדברי האומרים במסכת סוכה סוכה ממש. וזה טעמו של דבר. חג הסוכות תעשה לך באוספך מגרנך ומיקבך באוספך את תבואת הארץ ובתיכם מלאים כל טוב דגן ותירוש ויצהר, למען תזכור כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל במדבר ארבעים שנה בלא יישוב ובלא נחלה, ומתוך כך תתנו הודאה למי שנתן לכם נחלה ובתיכם מלאים כל טוב, ואל תאמרו בלבבכם כחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה.

In order that your generations shall know — The simple explanation is in accordance with those in Tractate Sukkah who say that the sukkot were actual booths (and not the clouds of glory) and this is the reasoning behind this matter. You shall make the festival of Sukkot when you gather in from your granaries and your winepresses and when you gather in the produce of your land and your houses are full of all good things, grain, wine and olive oil, so that you shall remember that I (G-d) sustained Israel in sukkot in the desert for forty years without civilization or a permanent residence. And as a result of remembering this you will give thanks to He who gave you an inheritance and houses full of all manner of goodness.

And don't say in your hearts, "It was my strength and the power of my hands that provided me with all these possessions."⁴

Rashbam points out a similarity to the verses in the Torah that obligate us to bless G-d after eating, where the context clearly indicates that this blessing is designed to introduce some humility when there is a strong chance of pride and arrogance. Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk⁵ explains that this is why the Torah only obligates a blessing *after* eating but not *before* eating (a rabbinic obligation). There is a greater chance of someone feeling independent of G-d when that person is full, satiated and content, than when someone is feeling hungry, weak and unsatisfied. Since the primary purpose of the blessing is to counteract the feeling of independence from G-d, the Torah obligated the blessing at the moment of greatest risk, after eating. Similarly, the festival of Sukkot, according to the Rashbam, is very much like a Grace after Meals for the entire year and all its produce.

These ideas may lead one to think that the appropriate antidote would be a period of fasting and repentance, however that would

directly contradict a person's natural inclinations. It is a time of year when people are full of joy and Judaism, generally, does not seek to deny or suppress human nature and instincts, but rather seeks to apply them in positive directions. The Torah wants us to celebrate and be happy and to channel that joy toward our relationship with the Creator and with other people. We should use this opportunity to appreciate G-d's benevolence as well as to share our good fortune with others. Through the sukkah, the lulav and the other species, the Torah directs us to use the products of the harvest in the fulfillment of *mitzvot*. Thus we neither deny the physical world nor wallow in it; rather we elevate it toward a higher purpose.⁶ This is similar to an idea mentioned by the Maharal in explaining why Yaakov was, according to Rashi, saying the Shema while embracing Yosef: "This is characteristic of the pious, that when something good happens to them, they cleave to the Holy One, blessed be He, for the good and the truth that He has done for them."⁷ Sukkot is a time when the Jewish people are naturally "in a good mood." The Torah does not want to dampen that mood, but seeks to utilize it so that the Jewish

people as a whole "cleave to G-d for the good that He has done for them."

A Time to Harvest our Inspiration

The gathering of the agricultural harvest also serves as a metaphor for the spiritual harvest. The Jewish people have just been through an intense period of introspection, repentance and prayer; the month of repentance, Ellul, followed by the Day of Judgment, Rosh Hashanah and the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. During this time, we labor in the fields of spiritual growth. On Sukkot, we harvest the inspiration, the joy and the closeness to G-d that is produced by this period of repentance. The intense feeling of joy on Sukkot is the feeling of one who hears good news — forgiveness — when he was expecting the worst — punishment; of one who has been given a fresh start in life after making many serious mistakes. Sukkot thus reflects the joy of completing a difficult job and celebrates both the conclusion of the physical harvest and the culmination of the spiritual harvest.

Traditionally, Sukkot is associated with happiness more than any other

festival. In our prayers, it is called "the time of our happiness" while in the Mishnah, it is referred to simply as "the festival."⁸ Rav Yitzchak Hutner understands this joy as part of the cycle of the creation of the Jewish people. On Pesach, when we were taken out of Egypt, we were designated as G-d's agents. On Shavuot, when we were given the Torah, we were told exactly what He wanted us to do. On Sukkot we come back to G-d and declare, "We have accomplished our task; we have brought in the harvest from the fields."⁹

Maimonides offers the following rationale in his *Guide for the Perplexed*:¹⁰

ושני המועדים האלה, רוצה לומר, סוכות, ופסח, מלמדים דעות ומדות, אמנם הדעת בפסח, הזכרת אותות מצרים והתמדתם לדורות, אמנם הדעת בסוכות, להתמיד זכר אותות המדבר לדורות, אמנם המדות הוא שיהיה האדם זוכר ימי הרעה בימי הטובה, בעבור שירבה להודות להשם ושילמוד מדת ענוה ושפלות, יאכל מצה ומרור בפסח לזכור מה שאירע לנו, וכן יצא מן הבתים לשכון בסכות כמו שיעשו השרויים בצער שוכני המדברות, לזכור שכן היה ענינו בתחלה, כי בסכות הושבתי את בני ישראל וגו', ונעתקנו מן הענין ההוא לשכון בבתי המצוריים במקום הטוב שבארץ והשמן שבה בחסד

The intense feeling of joy on Sukkot is the feeling of one who hears good news when he was expecting the worst; of one who has been given a fresh start in life after making many serious mistakes.



השם וביעדיו לאבותינו, בעבור שהיו אנשים שלמים בדעותם ומדותם, ר"ל אברהם יצחק ויעקב, שזה ג"כ הוא ממה שהתורה תלויה עליו, ר"ל שכל טוב שהטיב השם לנו וייטיב, אמנם הוא בזכות אברהם יצחק ויעקב אבותינו, מפני ששמרו דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ומשפט, אבל צאתנו מסכות למועד שני ר"ל שמיני חג העצרת, הוא להשלים בו מן השמחות מה שאי אפשר לעשות בסכות אלא בבתי הרחבים ובבנינים ... והנראה לי בארבעת מינים שבלולב, שהם שמחה בצאתם מן המדבר אשר היה לא מקום זרע ותאנה וגפן ורמון ומים אין לשתות, אל מקום האילנות נותני פרי והנהרות, ולקח לזכרון זה הנאה שבפירות האדמה, והטוב שבריוח, והיפה שבעליו, והטוב שבעשבים ג"כ, ר"ל ערבי נחל, ואלו הארבעה מינין הם אשר קבצו שלשת הדברים האלה, האחד מהם, רוב מציאותם בארץ ישראל בעת ההיא והיה כל אדם יכול למצאם, והענין השני, טוב מראה ורעננותם ויש מהם טובים בריחם והם אתרוג והדס, אבל לולב וערבה אין להם ריח לא טוב ולא רע, והענין השלישי, עמדם על לחותם ורעננותם בשבעה ימים, מה שאי אפשר זה באפרסקים ורמונים ובאספרגל ובאגס וכיוצא בהן.

*The two festivals, Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, imply also the teaching of certain truths and certain moral lessons. Passover teaches us to remember the miracles which G-d wrought in Egypt, and to perpetuate their memory; the Feast of Tabernacles reminds us of the miracles wrought in the wilderness. **The moral lesson derived from these feasts is this: man ought to remember his evil days in his days of prosperity. He will thereby be induced to thank G-d repeatedly, and to lead a modest and humble life.** We eat, therefore, unleavened bread and bitter herbs on Passover in memory of what has happened unto us, and leave [on Succoth] our houses in order to dwell in tabernacles, as inhabitants of deserts do that are in want of comfort. We shall thereby remember that this has once been our condition; "I made*

*the children of Israel to dwell in booths" (Lev. xxiii. 43); although we dwell now in elegant houses, in the best and most fertile land, by the kindness of G-d, and because of His promises to our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were perfect in their opinions and in their conduct. **This idea is likewise an important element in our religion; that whatever good we have received and ever will receive of G-d, is owing to the merits of the Patriarchs, who "kept the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment"** (Gen. xviii. 19). We join to the Feast of Tabernacles the Feast of the Eighth Day, in order to complete our rejoicings, which cannot be perfect in booths, but in comfortable and well-built houses ... I believe that the four species are a symbolical expression of our rejoicing that the Israelites exchanged the wilderness, "a place of no seed, nor of figs, or vines, or of pomegranates, or of water to drink" (Num. xx. 5), with a country full of fruit-trees and rivers. In order to remember this we take the fruit which is the most pleasant of the fruit of the land, branches which smell best, most beautiful leaves, and also the best of herbs, i.e., the willows of the brook. These four kinds have also those three purposes: First, they were plentiful in those days in Palestine, so that everyone could easily get them. Secondly, they have a good appearance, they are green; some of them, viz., the citron and the myrtle, are also excellent as regards their smell, the branches of the palm-tree and the willow having neither good nor bad smell. Thirdly, they keep fresh and green for seven days,¹¹ which is not the case with peaches, pomegranates, asparagus, nuts, and the like.*

G-d's Relationship with the Jewish People

Maimonides emphasizes gratitude to G-d for our present good fortune by contrasting it with our

condition in Egypt and later in the desert. In this way, he continues, we will be encouraged to thank G-d continuously and to lead a modest and humble life. In addition, the festival reminds us of our connection and debt to our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and also directs us to appreciate the beautiful gift of the Land of Israel.

On the simplest level, this mitzvah reminds us that G-d protected and preserved the Jewish people in the desert after He took them out of Egypt. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch¹² sees Sukkot and the other festivals as reflecting a broader historical perspective, and understands the "desert" as a metaphor for exile. Passover celebrates the Exodus, which was the *physical creation* of the Jewish people. Shavuot celebrates the giving of the Torah, our *spiritual creation*. Sukkot celebrates the remarkable *physical survival and continuity* of the Jewish people, the result of ongoing and all-encompassing Divine Providence. Considering Sukkot in this light, we can understand the opinion in the Talmud¹³ that the booths represent not the Jews' physical dwellings in the desert, but rather, G-d's clouds of glory,¹⁴ which surrounded and protected the Jewish people from the time of the Exodus until they reached the Land of Israel. Sukkot is thus understood not simply as a reminder of a specific historical period, but rather as an experience that renews our awareness of G-d's relationship to the Jewish people throughout history. The desert symbolizes our exile, diaspora and wandering, while the clouds represent G-d's unceasing protection, care and Divine providence. Similarly, the *Zohar* calls the sukkah "the shade of faith"¹⁵ because sitting under the

The Importance of Knowing the Reason for Sitting in the Sukkah

R. Yaakov ben Asher, *Tur, Orach Chaim* no. 625, has a lengthy discourse about the reason why we sit in the sukkah on Sukkot. R. Yoel Sirkes, *Bach* ad loc., a commentary on *Tur*, points out that this is highly unusual. The *Tur* is a halachic work and doesn't generally discuss the reasons behind various mitzvot. R. Sirkes suggests the following:

איכא למידק בדברי רבינו שאין זה מדרכו בחיבורו זה לבאר הכונה לשום מקרא שבתורה כי לא בא רק לפסוק הוראה או להורות מנהג ופה האריך לבאר ולדרוש המקרא דבסכת תשבו ויראה לי לומר בזה שסובר דכיון דכתיב למען ידעו וגו' לא קיים המצוה כתיקונה אם לא ידע כוונת מצות הסוכה כפי פשטה ולכן ביאר לפי הפשט דעיקר הכוונה בישיבת הסוכה שיזכור יציאת מצרים.

One should investigate the words of our teacher who does not generally provide the explanation of verses in this work. His purpose is to provide halachic rulings or inform us about customs. Yet here, he gives a lengthy explanation of the verse "You shall sit in the sukkah etc." It seems to me that [Tur] is teaching us that since the verse states, "In order that your future generations should know [that I placed you in tabernacles when I took you out of Egypt.]," if one does not know the purpose of sitting in the sukkah, as described by the verse, one does not fulfill the mitzvah properly. For this reason, he explained that the primary purpose of sitting in the sukkah is to remember the Exodus from Egypt.

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shade of the sukkah, the Jewish people understand that they must not place their faith solely in the walls and roofs of their houses, or in any physical protection they might construct, but rather in G-d. We have learned through many years of bitter exile that although we are obligated to pursue material efforts for our protection — medicine, self-defense, political lobbying and so on — it is only when they are accompanied and blessed by G-d's Divine Providence that they are able to protect us. Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook writes that one lesson of Sukkot is that in building our national home "we must recognize the absolute truth that the spiritual law of nature, which is the word of G-d, Who decreed that the house of Israel will be built,¹⁶ that is our primary wall of fortification, despite the fact that the feeble human eye cannot discern its

impenetrability and its power."¹⁷

The Gaon of Vilna notes that the clouds of glory left the Jewish people when they sinned at Mt. Sinai and built the Golden Calf. They did not return until after the Jews repented and were forgiven on Yom Kippur. The date on which the clouds of glory once again encircled the nation was the fifteenth day of the month of Tishrei, which is the first day of Sukkot.¹⁸ This explains why Sukkot is celebrated right after Yom Kippur even though it is related to the Exodus and might be expected to occur soon after Passover. Sukkot demonstrates that G-d's love for the Jewish people is just as strong after they have sinned as it was before the sin.¹⁹ The clouds of glory were returned to us, even though our own actions had caused them to be removed, because the bond

between G-d and the Jewish people is eternal.²⁰ The Gaon saw this idea hinted at in the verse in the Song of Songs, "His left hand is under my head and His right arm embraces me."²¹ "His left hand," which symbolizes justice and judgement, "is under my head" — the head of the year, Rosh Hashanah. "His right arm," which symbolizes lovingkindness, "embraces me" on Sukkot. The minimal sukkah according to halachic guidelines consists of two complete walls and the third wall, which only has to be a hand's-breadth (*tefach*) long.²² The Gaon of Vilna points out that the two walls and the hand's-breadth are suggestive of an embracing arm and hand, symbolizing G-d's embrace of the Jews.

In a similar vein, Rav Moshe DiTrani (*Mabit*), author of the book *Beit Elokim*, sees the sukkah as a symbol of G-d's love for the Jewish people. He asks why the Torah does not designate a festival in commemoration of the miracles of the manna and of the miraculous well of Miriam, and only celebrates the miracle of the clouds of glory (*ananei hakavod*)?²³ My revered teacher, Rav Shlomo Fischer, maintains that indeed the well of Miriam is commemorated by the ceremony of water libation (*nisuch hamayim*) on Sukkot and the manna is commemorated by the mitzvot of challah and omer.²⁴ However, the question of the *Mabit* still stands, since neither of these miracles has an entire festival dedicated to them, as does the miracle of the clouds of glory. The *Mabit* explains that supplying the Jews with food and water was a necessity, and for G-d to take them into the desert without those supplies would be tantamount to mass murder. In a sense, G-d had to perform the miracles of the manna and the water

out of sheer necessity. However, the climate-controlled embrace of the clouds of glory was a luxury, not a necessity, and therefore an expression of G-d's love for His people. It is that Divine love that we are celebrating on Sukkot. According to Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner (the Ishbitzer),²⁵ it is this embrace of G-d, the feeling of security, and His promise that He will never abandon us, that gives us such a special feeling of joy on Sukkot, so that this festival alone is known as “the time of our joy.”

Sukkah as a Temporary Space

Rav Eliyahu Dessler, in a classical *musar* perspective on Sukkot, notes that Jewish law describes the Sukkah as a temporary dwelling,²⁶ a status which informs many of the legal specifications for the Sukkah's construction.²⁷ Leaving our permanent houses with solid walls and roofs to live in a flimsy booth with a roof of branches is a dramatic and unequivocal statement that the material world is not what life is all about. By living in the sukkah, we are declaring that the entire physical world is really temporary, and that the only things we truly possess forever are the soul and its spiritual accomplishments. It was certainly within G-d's power to build five-star hotels and villas for the Jews in the Sinai Desert; why then did he put them in thatched huts? Because he wanted them, and us, to understand that there is no permanence to the physical world, and that focusing all aspirations and hopes on material attainments — a house, a car, another house, another car — is pointless. By living in the sukkah, we are bringing this message home to ourselves, not

just as intellectual knowledge, but as a transformative experience that will impact our lives.²⁸

Rav Moshe Sofer, the Chatam Sofer,²⁹ relates the festivals to the different realms of existence that are discussed in the *Sefer Yetzirah*:³⁰ *olam* — space, *shannah* — time and *nefesh* — life or soul.³¹ Pesach is the sanctity of life; *nefesh*, symbolized by the *mitzvot* of eating (*matzah*, *maror*, *korban Pesach*), sustains the soul and life. Shavuot, preceded by and dependent upon a *mitzvah* of counting time (Sefirat HaOmer), and named for that *mitzvah* (*shavuot* means “weeks”), is the sanctity of time; and Sukkot is the sanctity of place (*olam*), sanctifying the very space in which we live. This is why the Beit HaMikdash is called *Sukkat David*, the Sukkah of David, because it also is the sanctification of place, and like the sukkah, is a *mitzvah* into which one can immerse oneself entirely. It is our hope and prayer that, as we fulfill the *mitzvah* of sukkah with all its beautiful lessons and rationale, we all merit seeing the ultimate sukkah of the Beit HaMikdash in Jerusalem.

Endnotes

- 1 Exodus 34:22.
- 2 Deuteronomy 8:12-18.
- 3 Rashbam, Commentary on Leviticus 23:43.
- 4 Deuteronomy 5:17.
- 5 Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, *Meshech Hochmah*, Commentary on Deuteronomy 8:10.
- 6 Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb*, II Edot, Chapter 31, Par. 223.
- 7 Rav Yehudah Loewe, Maharal, *Gur Aryeh*, Commentary on Genesis 45:29.
- 8 Mishnah, Rosh Hashanah 1:2.
- 9 Rav Yitzchak Hutner, *Pachad Yitzchak*, Rosh Hashanah (*Hemshech Tishrei*), 9.

10 Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* 3:43, M. Friedlander translation.

11 This statement of Maimonides is always particularly painful to me as I regularly witness my *hadassim* and *aravot* drying up, shriveling and otherwise deteriorating by the second or third day of Sukkot.

12 Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb*, II Edoth, Chapter 23, Par. 169-170.

13 B. *Sukkah* 11b.

14 Exodus 13:21.

15 *Zohar*, *Parshat Emor*, 103a.

16 Based on Job 22:28.

17 Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, *Ma'amarei Ha-Reiyah*, 1:149-150.

18 Rav Eliyahu Kramer, GRA, *Commentary on Song of Songs* 2:6, (in *Kol Eliyahu*) cf. *Shir Ha-Shirim Rabbah* 2:19 where “His left hand” refers to Sukkot.

19 Rav Yitzchak Hutner, *Pachad Yitzchak*, Rosh Hashanah (*Hemshech Tishrei*), 10:8.

20 Ibid.

21 Song of Songs 2:6.

22 B. *Sukkah* 6b.

23 Rav Moshe ben Yosef DiTrani, *Sefer Beit Elokim*, *Sha'ar HaYesodot*, Ch. 36.

24 Rav Shlomo Fischer, *Drushei Beit Yishai*, *Drush* 23, p. 181 Footnote 5.

25 Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner of Ishbitz, *Mei Ha-Shiloah*, Vol. 1, *Parshat Emor*.

26 B. *Sukkah* 2a.

27 Ibid 2a, 21b.

28 Rav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, *Michtav MeEliyahu*, Vol. 2, p. 106.

29 Rav Moshe Sofer, *Torat Moshe*, Shavuot. For a different interpretation of the cycle of the festivals as they relate to these categories, see Rav Yerachmiel Yisrael Yitzchak of Alexander, *Yismach Yisrael*, Vol 2, Sukkot, Paragraph 7.

30 *Sefer Yetzirah*, Ch. 3, Mishnah 7.

31 Forming the acronym of *ash"n* — smoke, as these are the smokescreens through which we see existence — commentaries on *Sefer Yetzirah*.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe's Topsy-Turvy Sukkah

The hallmark of a true sage of the *mesorah* (tradition) is the radical embracement of a paradox. On the one hand, the *talmid chacham* is completely beholden to the Torah received from previous generations. But simultaneously, he has the ability and obligation to breathe new life into these ancient sources by offering innovative interpretations and novel theories.¹ It is the proper balance between these two poles that allows the *talmid chacham* to stay true to the timeless *mesorah* while making the eternal Torah timely and relevant to the people of his generation.

This description is perfectly apt for Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the seventh Rebbe of Chabad (henceforth “the Rebbe”). His adherence to the Torah of previous generations in general, and to the teachings of his predecessors in particular, is well known. He was a master of both *nigleh* and *nistar*,² with, of course, a particular expertise in the voluminous discourses of his predecessors. Every *ma’amar* (Chassidic discourse) he delivered began with a citation and analysis of a previous Rebbe’s Torah, and it was these ideas that created the contours of his thought. However, through a rigorous textual and conceptual analysis of these earlier teachings he was able to develop a sophisticated and comprehensive thought system of his own, which is striking in its



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innovativeness.³ It was this new/old philosophy that fueled Chabad’s singular activities in the second half of the twentieth century.

The Rebbe’s approach to the mitzvah of sukkah is a prime example of his interpretive method and philosophy. In this essay, I will summarize what I understand to be his central thesis regarding the nature of the sukkah and contextualize it within the broader framework of his thought.

A Transient World

Masechet Sukkah opens with a debate regarding the status of a sukkah that is higher than twenty *amot*. Rava explains that the debate depends on if a sukkah is a “permanent dwelling,” and therefore even a structure of this height is suitable for the mitzvah, or a “temporary dwelling,” and therefore such a tall structure is disqualified.⁴ The fact that we follow the latter opinion is often used as the foundation of a homily regarding the take-away message of the sukkah. For example, here are the words of Rav Yehonatan Eibeschitz:

ההנה יעצה לנו התורה בסוכות שהוא סוף
ימי תשובה לקבל על עצמנו גלות ולהיות כל

העולם נחשב בעינינו כתוהו וכצל ולכך אמרו
(סוכה ב.). צא מדירת קבע ושב בדירת עראי
להורות כי גרים אנחנו עלי ארץ מבלי קבע.
*Behold, the Torah counselled us that on Sukkot, which is the end of the days of repentance, we should accept upon ourselves an exile, so that the entire world will be in our eyes like nothing and like a shadow. And therefore they said (Sukkah 2a) “leave your permanent dwelling and stay in a temporary dwelling” to teach that we are strangers on this world without any permanence . . .*⁵

According to Rav Yehonatan Eibeschitz and others,⁶ the temporary nature of the sukkah represents the fleetingness of this world. Living in a sukkah for a week engrains within us that we are mere travelers, temporarily lodging in the hallway of this world while on a journey to the palace of the next world.

The Nullification of the World

On the surface, there is much in Chabad thought that would confirm this conclusion. One of the central tenets of Chabad philosophy is acosmism — a belief in the illusory nature of the world. When our eyes observe the world that surrounds us

and perceive a physical reality teeming with diversity, we are in fact being fed an illusion. In truth, nothing exists other than God — *ain od milvado* in the most literal sense possible. If we had spiritual eyes we would be able to see through the façade of reality and recognize the hidden true nature of the cosmos — simple divinity.⁷

And while other Kabbalistic schools exhorted their students to not dwell on this radical idea,⁸ Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad Chassidut, did just the opposite. Throughout *Tanya* he encourages his readers to contemplate the nothingness of our world and even the complete dissolution of the self into the light of the simple unity of Hashem.⁹ This contemplative service, known as *bittul*, is identified by the Alter Rebbe as the general principle underpinning all of Torah and *mitzvot*:

וזהו יסוד כל התורה להיות בטול היש לאין
וכל השלשה דברים שעליהם העולם עומד
היינו תורה ועבודה וגמ"ח כולם ענינם בטול
היש לאין.

*And this is the basis of the entire Torah, that there be the annihilation of being (yesh) into nothingness (ayin), and all the three things on which the world stands, that is Torah, worship, and charity, are all aspects of the annihilation of being into nothingness.*¹⁰

In the context of Sukkot, such a philosophy would seemingly lead one to Rav Yehonatan Eibeschutz's understanding of the sukkah's symbolism. If the goal of our service is to pierce the illusion of reality and see nothing other than Hashem, then the sukkah stands as a reminder that nothing in this world is as permanent, or even as ontologically stable, as it seems.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe on the Four Species

The midrash, *Vayikra Rabbah* 30:9, has a very cryptic comment on the four species:

פרי עץ הדר זה הקב"ה שכתוב בו (תהלים קד) הוד והדר לבשת
כפות תמר זה הקב"ה שכתוב בו (תהלים צב) צדיק כתמר יפרח
וענף עץ עבות זה הקב"ה דכתיב (זכריה א) והוא עומד בין ההדסים
וערבי נחל זה הקב"ה דכתיב ביה (תהלים סח) סולו לרוכב בערבות
בִּי-ה שמו.



R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson

1902-1994

"The fruit of a beautiful tree" (etrog), this is The Holy One Blessed be He as it states, (Tehillim 104) "He is clothed in glory and beauty." "Branches of a date palm" (lulav), this is The Holy One Blessed be He as it states, (Tehillim 92) "The righteous one flowers like a date." "A branch of a braided tree" (hadasim), this is The Holy One Blessed be He as it states, (Zechariah 1) "He stands between the myrtles (hadasim)." "Willows of the valley" (aravot), this is The Holy One Blessed be He as it states, (Tehillim 68) "Who rides in the skies (aravot) with his name "Y-ah."

What is the midrash trying to teach us by associating the four species with God? R. Schneerson, *Sha'arei HaMoadim*, Sukkot pp. 151-152, suggests that one of the goals of the mitzvah of taking the four species is to bring God into our lives through the performance of mitzvot. The midrash is trying to convey the message that by taking the four species, we are actually "taking" God into our lives.

Torah To Go Editors

Hashem Is Here, Hashem Is There...

But this description of the nullification of the world is only one pole of the great paradox elucidated in *Tanya*.¹¹ Once the Alter Rebbe understands the unity of Hashem to mean that from Hashem's perspective nothing exists other than Him, this simple sense of unity also grants great significance to this world. Everything that we perceive in our world is permeated with divinity and can be a conduit of experiencing Hashem.¹² Our *mitzvot* and service are not only intended to condemn this world to nothingness, but also to draw divinity into it.¹³ This pole will reach its peak in the times of Mashiach when the world

will be purified to the degree that human beings will be able to stand "without being nullified in their very existence" and perceive the "Divine light that will be revealed to them . . . without any cloak."¹⁴

The Rebbe's First Address — Hashem's Garden

As early as his first *ma'amar* as the leader of Chabad, the Rebbe outlined what he saw as the mission of his generation. He focused on a midrash¹⁵ that describes "*Ikar Shechina*" as originally occupying "*tachtonim*." When Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, the *Shechina* ascended to the first heaven, and with the next six major human sins the *Shechina*

continuously ascended until it reached the seventh and highest heaven. Then seven *tzadikim*, beginning with Avraham, merited to lower the *Shechinah*, level after level, until Moshe, the seventh *tzadik*, merited to bring the *Shechina* back to the land.

After dissecting the midrash's key terms, the Rebbe concluded that "*Ikar Shechina*" refers to the highest levels of divinity and "*tachtonim*" refers to "this lowly world." In other words, the ideal home for the *Shechina* is not the higher spiritual worlds, but our physical one. He then made the striking assertion that would define Chabad under his tenure:

שנמצאים אנחנו בעיקבתא דמשיחא, בסיומא
דעקבתא, והעבודה – לגמור המשכת
השכינה, ולא רק שכינה כ"א עיקר שכינה,
ובתחתונים דוקא.

We are now very near the approaching footsteps of Mashiach, indeed, we are at the conclusion of this period, and our spiritual task is to complete the process of drawing down the Shechinah — moreover, the essence of the Shechinah

— *within specifically our lowly world.*¹⁶

Previous generations tended toward a more spiritualized service, with the goal to "extricate [oneself] from the straits of contraction ... and to rise ... into the hidden world in which the light of the *Ein-Sof*, the completely hidden God, gleams and shines as it were."¹⁷ According to the Rebbe, as we approach the days of Mashiach, our focus must shift from the heavens to finally bringing the *Ikar Shechina* back to its garden, to our lowly world.

To clarify this radical assertion, the Rebbe cited the above-mentioned eschatological prediction of the Alter Rebbe — that when Mashiach comes, the physical world will no longer hide the presence of Hashem but we will be able to perceive reality in its true form and see Hashem everywhere. It is the mission of the last generation to demonstrate the divinity of the *tachtonim* — of all that seems lowly and secular.

The charge to cultivate a *dirah be-*

tachtonim engendered a conscious revolution in many poles of religious thought and practice.¹⁸ Focusing on the "*tachtonim*" created an inverse hierarchy in which items, activities and places that were previously considered more overtly "spiritual" became secondary to specifically the more physical and seemingly secular. The example that is relevant for our discussion is the changed perspective on how the world outside of "the four cubits of halacha" should be perceived.

If previous generations of yeshiva students were taught to stay in the Beit Midrash, far from the dangers of the outside world, this was because the *Shechina* was still in the seven heavens. However, in order for our generation to complete its mission, the Rebbe felt that we must begin to see the entire world in the messianic light — as Hashem's garden and home.¹⁹ Therefore, now is the time to take the spiritual energies amassed in previous generations to go everywhere — from secular college campuses to Katmandu — in order to demonstrate that even such places are, in truth, a wellspring of divinity.²⁰

The Rebbe's Temporary/ Permanent Sukkah

With this background, let us briefly look at the Rebbe's conception of the sukkah as a temporary dwelling.²¹ While he shared Rav Yehonatan Eibeschitz's sukkah-world analogy, his take away message had a different spin. The Rebbe noted that in light of our ruling that the structure of the sukkah is "temporary," it is striking that we find the exact opposite language regarding how we are supposed to behave in the sukkah. The Mishna²² says that "all seven days

Previous generations of yeshiva students were taught to stay in the Beit Midrash because the *Shechina* was still in the seven heavens. However, in order for our generation to complete its mission, the Rebbe felt that we must begin to see the entire world in the messianic light. Now is the time to take the spiritual energies amassed in previous generations to go everywhere — from secular college campuses to Katmandu — in order to demonstrate that even such places are a wellspring of divinity.

a person should make his sukkah permanent (*keva*) and his house temporary (*arai*),” and Rashi explains that one’s main place of living for the duration of Sukkot should be the sukkah. This idea is underscored by the Talmud Yerushalmi’s source for this halakha:

כתיב בסכת תשבו ואין תשבו אלא תדורו.
כמה דאת אמר וירשתם אותה וישבתם בה.

It is written: “In sukkot you shall sit (teishvu)” and the phrase “you shall sit” means nothing other than “you shall dwell.” As you must say [of this verse concerning the settling of Eretz Yisrael]: “You shall possess it and you shall dwell in it (ve-ye-shavtem bah)” (Devarim 11:31).²³

The dwelling in the Land of Israel certainly has a permanent aspect to it as that is where the Jewish people will live for all of eternity. So while the sukkah is structurally temporary, life should be lived there in a permanent fashion.²⁴

The Rebbe said that the same dichotomy is true of the world around us. The world as we see it is truly a transient place of little value, not worth our time and attention. But this is only accurate if we think

of our world solely in terms of what our eyes currently perceive. If we understand the notion of Hashem being revealed through each and every aspect of this world and the mission of creating a *dirah be-tachtonim*, then we must begin to live our lives in a “permanent” fashion. Every action and interaction in all four corners of the world can help reveal the true divine nature of reality.

This idea is applicable to the full gamut of human experience. Even a simple and temporary hut that is comprised of the “leftovers of the granary and harvest” can become a home for the *Shechina*.²⁵ Being honest in business and mentioning God’s name to colleagues helps build the equivalent of the *mishkan* in the office.²⁶ Helping a single not yet observant Jew put on tefillin in Alaska lets Hashem crack through the surface of reality in yet another location. Fighting poverty in America while inspiring the American public to lead moral lives filled with biblical values can reveal God in non-Jewish society in heretofore unimaginable proportions.²⁷ These activities as well as every other activity in our lives are all part of creating a *dirah*

be-tachtonim, the ultimate permanent (*keva*) home.

Conclusion

While the Rebbe and his generation were ultimately unsuccessful in completing the *dirah be-tachtonim*, on the 28th of Nissan 5751, less than a year before his debilitating stroke, he left marching orders for his followers:

מה עוד יכולני לעשות כדי שכל בני ירעישו ויצעקו באמת ויפעלו להביא את המשיח בפועל לאחר שכל מה נעשה עד עתה לא הועיל והראי' שנמצאים עדיין בגלות ועוד ועיקר בגלות פנימי בעיני עבודת השם. הדבר היחידי שיכולני לעשות למסור הענין אליכם ... ואני את שלי עשיתי ומכאן ולהבא תעשו אתם כל אשר ביכלתכם.

What more can I do to motivate the entire Jewish people to clamor and cry out, and thus actually bring about the coming of Mashiach? All that has been done until now has been to no avail. For we are still in exile; moreover, we are in an inner exile in regard to our own service of God. All that I can possibly do is to give the matter over to you . . . I have done whatever I can; from now on, you must do whatever you can.²⁸

May we merit to complete this mission.



Endnotes

1 For a beautiful description of these two poles, see the article of *mori ve-rabbi* Rabbi Michael Rosensweig, “Mesorah as a Halachic Source and Sensibility” printed in the summer 2011 edition of *Jewish Action*. It is available at https://www.ou.org/jewish_action/05/2011/mesorah_as_halachic_source_and_sensibility/

2 For a record regarding the Rebbe’s profound scholarship, see Nechemia Polen, “The Rebbe: Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson by Samuel C. Heilman and Menachem M. Friedman (review)” *Modern Judaism* 34:1 (2014), 127-129.

3 This adjective is taken from the writings of Rav Feital Levin, one of the select cadre charged with transcribing the Rebbe’s oral discourses. In his book *Heaven on Earth: Reflections on the Theology of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menahem M. Schneerson* (Kehot, 2002), a summary of the Rebbe’s “comprehensive and consistent theological system,” Rav Levin writes the following in his forward: “It appears justified to maintain, as this book does, that the general thrust of the Rebbe’s theology, whilst firmly rooted in classic Chasidic teachings, is strikingly innovative. Indeed, even those relevant perceptions that were expressed previously are no longer isolated thoughts, but are now incorporated into a total system.” It is important to note that Rav Levin reports that the Rebbe read and edited this book before approving it for publication, making it an authoritative primary source for the Rebbe’s philosophy.

4 *Sukkah* 2a and 7b.

5 *Ya’arot Devash, Derush* 6 (*Or HaSeifer*, 1983), pg. 134.

6 See *Shalmei Todah* on Sukkot, pg. 20-22 that similar ideas were expressed by the Chida, Gra, *Kli Yakar* and Rabbeinu Yonah.

7 *Tanya, Likutei Amarim*, chapter 20-22 and the opening chapters of *Sha’ar ha-Yichud ve-haEmunah*. A good illustration of this idea

is a story regarding the Alter Rebbe on his deathbed (recorded at (www.likkuteitorah.com/Tzav--for%20interim%20web%20posting.htm):

...there is a well-known story relating that, on his deathbed, the Alter Rebbe gestured toward the ceiling and asked his grandson and eventual successor, the Tzemach Tzedek, what he saw there. “I see wooden beams,” replied the Tzemach Tzedek. “I see only Godliness,” his grandfather said.

8 *Nefesh HaChaim* 3:3,6.

9 See, for example, *Tanya, Likutei Amarim*, chapter 33.

10 *Torah Or, Parshat Noach*, 11a. Translation from Rachel Elior, *The Paradoxical Ascent to God: The Kabbalistic Theosophy of Habad Hasidism*, trans. Jefferey Green, (SUNY Press, 1992), 144. See there for a broader analysis of this contemplative process.

11 Rachel Elior, *The Paradoxical Ascent to God*, 131-138.

12 See, *Tanya, Likutei Amarim* chapter 41, 52. For a clear explanation of the matter see Nissan Mindel, *Rabbi Schneur Zalman Volume 2: The Philosophy of Chabad* (Kehot Publication Society, 1974), 124-125.

13 *Tanya, Likutei Amarim*, chapter 36-37; *Likutei Torah, Drushim le-Rosh ha-Shanah*, 61a. For more sources and an analysis see Dov Schwartz, *Mah’shevet Habad* (University of Bar Ilan Press, 2010), 118-119.

14 *Tanya, Likutei Amaraim*, chapter 36.

15 Midrash Rabbah, *Shir ha-Shirim* 5:5

16 *Bati LeGani* 5711, end of chapter 3. English translation is from http://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/115098/jewish/Basi-Legani-5711-Chapter-3.htm.

17 *Halakhic Man*, 61. This is Rav Soloveitchik’s description of the Alter Rebbe’s explanation of the shofar’s sound. While for Rav Soloveitchik the chassid (*homo religiosus*) stands as a foil to halakhic man, the Rebbe’s articulation of the final stages of Chassidut

brings them much closer together. This is highlighted by the fact that Rav Soloveitchik quotes the midrash of *Ikar Shechina be-tachtonim* as a source for halakhic man’s this-worldly orientation (*Halakhic Man*, pg. 55) – the same midrash that the Rebbe made into the cornerstone of his philosophy.

18 See Levin, *Heaven on Earth*, 6-27; Alon Dahan, *Go’el Aharon: Mishnato ha-Meshihit shel R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson* (Contento de Semrik, 2014), 38-62 for a summary. Dahan’s book is based on his dissertation, *Dirah be-Tahtonim: Mishnato ha-Meshihit shel R. Menahem Mendel Schneerson*, (submitted as a doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University Press, 2006).

19 For a beautiful articulation of the Rebbe’s positive view of our world in light of these ideas, see his emphatic address from January 26 (10th of *Shevat*) 1972, available at http://www.chabad.org/therebbe/livingtorah/player_cdo/aid/253998/jewish/Its-a-Beautiful-World.htm.

20 See, for example, *Likutei Sichot* volume 33, pg. 275; *Inyanah shel Torat ha-Chasidut*, chapter 21; Rav Levin, *Heaven on Earth*, 128-138.

21 See, *Likkutei Sichot* volume 9, pg. 91; *Torat Menachem* 5713 volume 1, pg. 24.

22 *Sukkah* 28b.

23 Yerushalmi *Sukkah* 3:9. Translation is from the Schottenstein Edition.

24 This dichotomy is sharpened according to the approach of Rav Michael Rosensweig, “*BeInyan Mitzvat Sukkah*” (*Beit Yitzhak* 30) 285-297, that the *cheftza* of the sukkah itself needs to be treated as a *keva* home despite its temporary structure.

25 See *Torat Menachem* cited above.

26 *Torat Menachem* 5750 volume 4, pg. 192.

27 See, for example, http://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/558041/jewish/Turning-Disappointment-into-Food-for-the-Hungry.htm.

28 *Torat Menachem* 5751 volume 3, pg. 119.



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Closing Arguments: Reexamining What Matters On the Top of the Lulav

The search for a lulav can be both exhilarating and overwhelming. There are several details to be concerned about and the favorite of many b'nei Torah, a “totally closed lulav,” is often elusive or exorbitantly priced. A proper decision regarding which lulav to use, as well as the appropriate amount of resources to spend finding a suitable lulav, hinges on understanding several of the Gemara’s statements regarding a lulav and its leaves.

Double or Nothing

At the center of a lulav is a thick, green spine called the *shidra*. The long, familiar lulav leaves grow from the *shidra*, close and parallel to it, on both sides. If you look at a lulav from the back (the yellower side) and inspect it carefully, you will notice that each lulav leaf is made up of two twin leaflets. The leaflets are connected on one side (called their apex). If you haven’t noticed those component leaves on your lulav, you have seen them as something else — lulav rings. Those rings are made from individual lulav leaflets that are separated from each other by gently severing them along their connection, called a midvein. Most lulavim also have a central, uppermost leaf that extends from the *shidra* and beyond it. Like all other lulav leaves, that leaf also consists of twin leaflets.



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The leaflets are at the center of a major dispute in the Rishonim and the *Shulchan Aruch*. The Gemara (discussed below) emphasizes that a lulav is only kosher if the leaflets remain together and are not split along the midvein. Many Rishonim understand that halacha to be discussing all (or most) of the lulav’s leaves. If they are split along the midvein, the lulav is invalid. Other Rishonim ascribe a unique status specifically to the central, uppermost leaf. They maintain that the only leaflets that halacha demands remain together are the leaflets of that middle leaf.

The Gemara uses the term *tiyomes* — “twin” — to describe a double leaf. The Rishonim that view all the lulav leaves as equally important interpret the word *tiyomes* to be referring to the twin nature of all the lulav leaves. The Rishonim that attribute specific importance to the central middle leaf understand the word *tiyomes* to be referring to the twin leaflets of that specific leaf. This dispute has important ramifications for understanding the words of the Gemara and for purchasing an ideal lulav.

The Talmudic Sources

The Gemara disqualifies a split lulav in two *sugyos* in *Perek Lulav Hagazul*.

First, the Gemara (*Sukkah*, 31b–32a) quotes two variant rulings for a lulav that is *nisdak* — split. One Braisa rules that it is kosher and another states that it is invalid. The Gemara resolves the disparity by explaining that a split lulav is kosher unless the split forms a *himnik* — a fork shape.

The Gemara states:

אמר רב הונא וכו' נסדק כשה' ונסדק כשה' והתניא לולב כפוף קוץ סדוק וכו' פסול וכו' אמר רב פפא דעביד כהימנך.

Rav Huna stated, “if it is split it is valid.” If it is split it is valid? Didn’t we learn that “a lulav that [has a top that] is bent over, squashed, or split is invalid?” Rav Papa stated, “it [is invalid only if the split] is shaped like a fork (himnik).”

Next, the Gemara (32a) states that if the *tiyomes* of the lulav is split, the lulav is *pasul*.

אמר (רבי יוחנן) [ר' מתון] אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: נחלקה התימות - נעשה כמי שניטלה התימות, ופסול.

Rabi Masun said in the name of Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi, “if the *tiyomes* is divided it is as if the *tiyomes* was removed, and it is invalid.”

There are three rules that emerge from these quotes in the Gemara:

1. A split lulav is kosher.
2. A lulav split in the shape of a *himnik* — fork — is pasul.
3. If the *tiyomes* — leaf pair — is split the lulav is pasul.

A Lulav Divided Shall Not Stand — *Nechlika Hatiyomes*

We often use the word “*tiyomes*” colloquially to refer to the middle leaf of the lulav. Yet since the Gemara itself does not identify what the *tiyomes* — pair — is, its identification is the subject of much discussion and dispute among the Rishonim, as mentioned above. The opinions of the Rishonim can be grouped into four different approaches.

1. Rif and Rambam: *Tiyomes* Applies to All Leaves

Many Rishonim¹ maintain that *nechlika hatiyomes* — the division of the pair — is a *p’sul* that refers to all the leaves of a lulav equally. They explain that, as discussed above, each lulav leaf is made of two identical leaflets connected in the back by a narrow spine, the midvein. The midvein that holds the two leaflets together is called the *tiyomes*. If all (or most) of the lulav’s leaves have their leaflet pairs severed from one another along their common midvein, the lulav is pasul because of *nechlikah hatiyomes*.

The Rif explains:

פירוש התיומת גבא דהוצא דמתיים להו לשני צידי העלה ומשוי להו חד כי כל אחת ואחת

כפולה לשנים ותאומה מגבה ואם נפרדו ההוצין זה מזה ועמד כל אחד ואחד כשהוא כפול לב’ והתיומת שלהן קיימת כשר ואם נחלקה התיומת הרי הוא כאילו נפרצו העלין ופסול:

The tiyomes is the back of the leaf that pairs the two leaflets into one, because each leaf is divided into two leaflets and the tiyomes is on the back. And if the leaves are spread apart from one another but each leaf remains with its leaflets paired and their tiyomes intact, it is valid; and if the tiyomes is divided, it is as if the leaves are severed and it is invalid.

This approach is echoed by the Rambam:

ברייתא עלין של לולב כך היא, כשהם גדלין גדלין שנים שנים ודבוקין מגבן וגב כל שני עלין הדבוקין הוא הנקרא תיומת נחלקה התיומת פסול.

This is the way a lulav’s leaves are formed: When they grow, they grow two by two and they are connected in their back, and the back of each two leaflets is called the tiyomes. If the tiyomes is split, it is invalid.

The *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 645:3) echoes the *p’sak* of the Rif and the Rambam, in consonance with his guiding principle to rely on those pillars of halachic decision, and codifies the ruling of the Rambam verbatim.

2. The Ritva and Ran: the Middle Leaf

The Ritva and the Ran quote a different understanding of *tiyomes*. They explain that the *tiyomes* means the middle leaf of the lulav, which consists of two leaflets that adhere to each other. They then proceed to address a difficulty in reconciling the two rulings in the Gemara. On the one hand, the Gemara states that *nechlika*

Lulav: The Ultimate Symbol of Connection

Why do we recite the beracha “*al netilat lulav*” (on taking the lulav) when taking the four species? Why not “*al netilat minim*” (on taking the species) or “*al netilat etrog*” (on taking the etrog)? R. Yaakov Mecklenburg, *Iyun Tefillah* pp. 308-309, suggests that the word *lulav* is a conjugation of two words, *lul* and *lev*, both of which connote connection. The word *lul*, which we find in the *lula’ot* (loops) of the curtain of the Tabernacle (*Shemot* 26:5), represents an internal connection, something connected to itself.

The word *lev* represents the binding of two things together as we find (*Sukkah* 45b) that the Jewish people have a *lev echad* (single heart) to the service of their Father in Heaven. The lulav encompasses both of these qualities. Each of its leaves are bound together as a *tiyomet*, twin leaf, and the leaves themselves are bound toward the spine. This is the *lul* aspect of the lulav. Additionally, the lulav is bound together with the haddasim and aravot, and when one takes the four species, one holds the etrog together with the other three species. This is the *lev* aspect of the lulav. When one recites the beracha *al netilat lulav*, it is not only a beracha on the lulav itself but on the connection of all four species. This is why *al netilat lulav* was chosen as the text of the beracha.

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hatiyomes — if the *tiyomes* is split — the lulav is *pasul*. On the other hand, the Gemara states that a split in the lulav's middle leaf is only problematic if the split forms a *himnik* — fork.

In response, the Ritva and the Ran explain that if the leaflets of the middle leaf are separated, the lulav is still kosher unless one of two things happens: 1) the split *continues most of the length of the leaves* toward their beginning at the top of the *shidra* — the lulav's spine; 2) the split in the middle forms a *himnik*.

The opinion of the Ritva and the Ran is recorded in *Shulchan Aruch*. The Rama (OC 645:3) writes:

הגה: ויש מפרשים לומר דאם נחלק העלה העליון האמצעי שעל השדרה עד השדרה, מקרי נחלקה התיומת ופסול; והכי נוהגין.

And some explain that if the uppermost middle leaf that extends from the spine is split until the spine, it is called a split tiyomes and it is invalid, and that is how we customarily maintain.

Accordingly, an extremely large percentage of lulavim, even those with the middle leaf split that are discarded by merchants as “just good for lulav rings,” are still kosher. It is very uncommon to find a lulav that has such a significant split that would be problematic. This is especially true since the Rama is not actually mandating that the halacha is like the opinion that the middle leaf cannot be completely or mostly open, rather that it is an Ashkenazic custom to maintain that way.

Yet before picking up a lulav from the floor to use for the mitzvah, it is also important to check if the small split that it has could be identified as a *himnik*, fork split, the other *p'sul* that the Ritva and Ran mention, and discussed further below.

3. The Second Approach of the Ritva and the Ran: The Middle Leaf Chumra

The Ritva and Ran proceed to quote another answer that resolves the seeming contradiction that a split lulav is kosher and a forked lulav is not. They likewise identify the *tiyomes* as the middle leaf, yet they rule more strictly if it is split. *Any split in the lulav's middle leaves render it not kosher, according to this perspective.* In the words of the Ritva:

ועוד י"ל דאפילו נחלקה מיעוטה פסול
One can also suggest that even if it is split a small amount it is invalid.

Then the Ritva and Ran proceed to address the obvious question on this approach; if *any split* is problematic, why does the other Gemara remark that a split is a concern *only* if it is shaped like a *himnik*? They explain that, according to this approach, a *himnik* refers to a *horizontal split* in the leaf. Indeed, a leaf that has *any lengthwise split* between its leaflets is *always pasul*, even if the split is not fork shaped. If a leaf has a *horizontal split*, then it is kosher unless the horizontal split creates a fork shape.

They record that scrupulous individuals were concerned with this interpretation and did not use a lulav that possessed a small split lengthwise between its two middle leaflets. This second approach of the Ritva and the Ran — that any split in the lulav's *tiyomes* is problematic — is quoted by the Rama. He adds this opinion and recommends one to follow it as a *mitzvah min hamuvchar* (ideal mitzvah fulfillment):

מיהו לכתחלה, מצוה מן המובחר, נוהגין ליטול לולב שלא נחלק העלה העליון כלל כי יש מחמירין אפילו בנחלק קצת.
Nevertheless, ideally, as the choicest

fulfillment of the mitzvah, it is customary to take a lulav that has an uppermost leaf that is not split at all, because some are stringent even if it is split a bit.

However, their interpretation of a *himnik* as a horizontal split is not quoted by the poskim.

4. The Baalei HaTosafos: Two Tiyomos

Another definition of *tiyomes* is advanced by the Baalei HaTosafos.² They reject the approach that the *tiyomes* refers to the conjoined leaflets. Buttressed by a *Teshuvah HaGeonim*, they maintain that the *tiyomes* is a twin pair of connected middle leaves that only grows in a small number of lulavim.³

נחלקה התיומת כו' - מצא ר"י בתשובת הגאונים ניטלה התיומת אותו הוצא העליון בראש הלולב שאין הוצא למעלה הימנה והוא כשני הוצין דבוקין זה בזה ונקראין תיומת... ולדבריהם לא ימצא לנו לולב כשר כי בטורח נמצאין אותן שיש להם תיומת כזה אפי' אחד בה' מאות ויש לומר שאף לדבריהם אין פסול אלא שהיה מתחילה כענין זה ונחלק שנשתנה מבריותו

The Ri (Hazaken Baal HaTosafos) found in a Geonic Responsum, "The tiyomes is removed — [that phrase refers to] that upper leaf at the head of the lulav, that has no leaf above it, and it is like two leaves that are connected to one another and they are called a tiyomes." And according to their opinion [in the Geonic Responsum], we would never find a valid lulav, because those that have a tiyomes like that can be found with much trouble, not even one in five hundred [lulavim have such a tiyomes]. One can suggest that even according to their opinion [in the Geonic Responsum], we would only invalidate [the lulav] if it was originally like that and then was split, so it is different than the way it originally grew.

The *Beis Yosef* explains that the Geonim and the Baalei HaTosafos mean that the *tiyomes* — pair of leaves — is a phenomenon that exists only when a lulav grows with two identical leaves in the middle, sometimes colloquially referred to as a “double *tiyomes*.” The Gemara is referring to a split between two identical leaves in the middle that extend together from the lulav’s *shidra* (spine), not a split in the two leaflets of a single leaf. These Geonim require the paralleling middle leaves to remain together. The Baalei HaTosafos elaborate that most lulavim grow without two parallel leaves in the middle, rather they have one central leaf with two leaflets. Therefore, most lulavim would not be subject to the *p’sul* of *nechlika hatiyomes* altogether.

The Approach of the Baalei HaTosafos L’Halacha

The approach of the Baalei HaTosafos — that the two middle leaves must be connected — is not quoted in *Shulchan Aruch* at all. Yet the *Bach* (645) writes that one should theoretically be concerned with the opinion of the Geonim who disqualify a lulav that has two identical middle leaves that become separated. At the same time, the *Bach* opines that our lulavim do not have this issue. He maintains that even if one finds a lulav that has identical middle leaves, those leaves were never originally connected. Therefore, the lack of connection represents their normal growth, not an aberration. Accordingly, the *Bach* does not see a need to be concerned with the Geonim’s opinion in contemporary lulavim.

Yet the *Bikurei Yaakov* (645:9) quotes the *Bach* and adds that our lulavim were originally connected when they

began to grow. The *Bikurei Yaakov* writes that if one does find a lulav that has two *tiyomes* leaves, he should try to use it only if the leaves are still mostly connected with the brown lulav substance known as *kora*, in order to fulfill the opinion of the Geonim. Yet he is quick to highlight that this is only a *chumra l’chatchila* and not the actual halacha.

On the other hand, the Chazon Ish (145:4) does not see a need to be concerned with that understanding of the Geonim altogether.

Case Closed

Many knowledgeable consumers seek to fulfill the words of the Rama that recommend a closed lulav as the choicest fulfillment of their mitzvah. Therefore, they attempt to find a lulav with middle leaflets that are not opened at all. Yet it is important to note that there is significant reason to be lenient and to purchase a lulav that is partially open on top.

The *Taz* emphatically writes that he is convinced that when the Rishonim and the Rama write that the lulav is *pasul* if it has any split in its middle leaves, they do not mean *any* split literally. They merely mean that if the lulav is split more than a *tefach* (approximately three inches), it is problematic. Even according to the most stringent view that the Rama is quoting, any split that is less than a *tefach* long is permitted. The *Taz* concludes that he feels comfortable promulgating that ruling because the entire concern of having the uppermost middle leaf closed is a stringency added to another stringency:

בפרט שרוב הפוסקי' ס"ל דאין לעלה
האמצעי' חומרא בזה רק בצירוף רוב העלין

והיינו ברוב כל עלה ועלה ולמה נחמיר בעל'
האמצעי' לדיע' זו יותר מדאי

Especially since most authorities maintain that the middle leaf has no added halachic strictness here, rather [there is only a problem if the middle leaf is split] together with the majority of the leaves of the lulav [being split], and even those [splits are only problematic if they are split] most of their length of each leaf. So why should we be so stringent regarding the middle leaf according to this opinion (of the Rama) more than necessary?

In other words, the *Taz* is observing that the entire opinion of the Rama is based on a minority understanding in the Rishonim. The consensus is that the *tiyomes* refers to the junction of each of the leaves of the lulav or to a lulav with a pair of middle leaves. The *Mechaber* codifies the problem of *nechlika hatiyomes* as splits in most of the lulav leaves and does not even quote the definition of *tiyomes* as the middle leaf. The Rama adds that it is our custom to be concerned with the definition of *tiyomes* as the middle leaf, but the Rama is lenient as long as the leaf is not mostly split. The Rama then adds that the most ideal way to fulfill the mitzvah is that it should not be split at all. The *Taz* asserts that to fulfill the *mitzvah min hamuvchar* according to a minority opinion of the Rama, it makes sense for consumers to rely on his presumption that any split less than a *tefach* is not considered a split altogether. The *Mishna Berurah* (645:18,19) only recommends trying to find a lulav that is open less than a *tefach*, beyond what the *Taz* would consider closed, if such a lulav is readily available. That would seem to preclude investing significant time and money in finding a completely closed lulav on account of the *chumra* of a *mitzvah min hamuvchar* of one

opinion in the Rishonim on top of a definition of *tiyomes* that the Rama rules it is customary to be concerned about. Furthermore, if one notices during Sukkos that his “fully closed” lulav is a bit open on top, he should not feel that he is fulfilling the mitzvah in a *b’dieved* fashion.

Himnik — a Fork-Shaped Split

There is another factor that might encourage the consumer to prefer to purchase a lulav that is completely closed — the concern of *himnik*.

This *p’sul* is not based on a minority approach in the Rishonim, a minhag, and a *mitzvah min hamuvchar*, but on the Gemara as quoted by the *Shulchan Aruch*. As such, it might be a more formidable reason to search for a closed lulav.

As discussed, the Gemara ruled that if the lulav is split like a *himnik* it is *pasul*. The *Shulchan Aruch* and Rama (645; 7) likewise rule:

נסדק אם נתרחקו שני סדקיו זה מזה עד שיראו כשנים, פסול. הגה: ואפילו לא נחלקה התיומה העליונה בענין שיפסל הלולב מכח נחלקה התיומת.

If it is split that the two splits pieces are distant from one another until they look like two, it is pasul. Rama: And even if the upper tiyomes is not split in a way that would otherwise be an invalidating split.

Several Acharonim (*Taz* 645:9, *Gra* 645:7) explain the words of the Rama based on the first answer in the *Ritva* and *Ran*, quoted by the Rama, and discussed above. These poskim already disqualify a lulav with a divide spanning most of middle leaf because of *nechlika hatiyomes*. They maintain that a very small split in the middle leaf is usually irrelevant. Yet if the split is forked so it looks like two disparate

heads, it is invalid because of *himnik*. Even if the size alone is insufficient to render the divide problematic, if the split is fork shaped, it is invalid. That is what the Rama means when he explains that a *himnik* lulav is *pasul*, “even if the upper *tiyomes* is not split in a way that would otherwise be an invalidating split.”

When You Come to a Fork in a Lulav

A cursory reading of these Rishonim and the *Shulchan Aruch* might lead one to believe that any fork-shaped split poses a problem of *nechlika hatiyomes* like a *himnik*. This is ostensibly emphasized by the Acharonim:

The *Pri Megadim* (645 *Mishbetzos Zahav* 9) writes:

וכשנחלק עד שנראה ב' ראשי חופיא כשנים מרוחקין כהימנך פסול אף במיעוטו, וצ"ע, כי שכיח הרבה כך.

And if it is split until the two heads of the lulav leaves look like two bundles of leaves distant like a fork, even a small split is invalidating, and it needs further examination, because this is extremely common.

Similarly, the *Levushei Serad* (645:9) writes:

שהעולם אין מדקדקים ובראותם נחלק התיומת דהיינו העלה העליונה מעט בראשה מכשירין, וכשהוא פחות מטפח אומרים דכשר לכלי עלמא, וטועים הם, כי על פי רוב כשנחלק בראשה אפילו מעט נתרחקו ונעשו כהימנ"ק

Universally, people are not careful, and when they see that the tiyomes, that is the uppermost middle leaf, is split a bit they validate the lulav, and when it is less than a tefach, they say it is valid according to all opinions, and they are erring, because, in general, when it is split on top even a little bit, the ends

are distant from one another and it has become like a fork.

The *Beur Halacha* also writes:

בודאי כשנראו כשני ראשים אפילו אם נסדק רק מעט מן המעט אם נתרחקו הסדקין עד שנראו כשנים גם לדברי הט"ז פסול וכ"כ בלבושי שרד ובזה יהיה מיירי הר"ן
Definitely, when they look like two heads, even if it is split a bit of a bit, if the cracks are distanced until it looks like two, then it is even invalid according to the Taz and so writes the Levushei Serad, and this is the intent of the Ran (in his first opinion that invalidates a small himnik).

One might be tempted to marshal the words of these poskim to disqualify a lulav with even the smallest split between the leaves. Yet a careful reading of these poskim indicates that their sole intent is to increase consumer awareness that a *himnik* has no minimum *length*; they are not discussing its *width*. In contrast to the *p’sul* of *nechlika hatiyomes*, which spans most of the length of the leaves, the *p’sul* of *himnik* exists any time that the middle leaf is split and looks like it is two leaves.

Yet it is clear from the Rishonim as well as the terminology used by the poskim, that a *himnik* is still only a problem if it appears to be shaped like a fork, as the Gemara says. If it does not look like a fork, even if the two leaf-heads are not touching, it would not be considered a *himnik*. This is evident from the fact that the Rishonim that define the word “*himnik*” elaborate to describe a pronged fork (they were not common utensils) or actually illustrate a fork in their *sefarim*.⁴ It appears that they are intending to highlight that a *himnik* is not a problem unless it resembles the significant distance like the prongs of a fork. This is why the *Shulchan Aruch* and the poskim use terms

emphasizing the distance between the two leaves such as “distant” and “became distant from one another.” Even though a *himnik* might be problematic if it descends only slightly along the length of the lulav, it needs significant *width* to create a two-pronged appearance.

That is how Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halichos Shlomo* O.C. 645) is recorded as having ruled:

דאף הלבושי שרד בהגהותיו לשו"ע כאן שהחמיר אף בנסדק קצת וכו', לא נתכוין כלל לפסול בנסדק גרידא, דודאי בעינו נתרחקו ממש זמ"ז ובהא לית מאן דפליג כלל
Even the Levushei Serad in his comments on the Shulchan Aruch here that is stringent even with a small split, does not mean at all to invalidate with a regular split, because we definitely need true distance between the two sides, and no one argues on that at all.

This observation is also made by Rav Yechiel Michel Stern (*Kashrus Arbaas Haminim* p. 202), who states:

והנה אע"פ שמדברי הלבושי שרד מפורש להחמיר בעשוי כהימנך גם במשהו ממש מ"מ נראה שאין כוונתו אלא בנעשה לארכו בזה החמיר אף בכל שהוא אבל ברוחבו צריך מרחק גדול בין שני ראשי העלים כדי שיפסל. ועל כן גם לדעת המשנה ברורה שהחמיר במשהו מיירי ג"כ באופן שנעשה כהימנך

ונפתח הרבה לרוחב אלא שס"ל שבשיעור ארכו פסול אפי' במשהו אבל אין הוכחה מדברי המשנה ברורה שס"ל שבנסדק מעט והמרחק בין ראש עלה אחד לשני הוא קטן שיפסל.

And even though from the words of the Levushei Serad it is explicit to be strict if it is shaped like a himnik, even with a truly miniscule amount, nevertheless it seems that his intent is regarding its length, in this matter to be concerned even in a miniscule amount, but in its width, it needs a great distance between the two heads of the leaves in order to invalidate.

Therefore, even according to the opinion of the Mishna Berurah that is stringent with a minute [split], he is discussing that in a situation where it is like a fork and spread wide widthwise. He merely maintains that lengthwise it is invalid even in a minute amount. But there is no proof from the Mishna Berurah that he maintains that if it is split a little, so that that the distance between one leaflet head and the other is small, that he would invalidate it.⁵

Some quote that the Brisker Rav was observed or was heard to be extremely concerned with a *himnik* and ruled out many lulavim that had small splits at their zenith. It is possible that the Brisker Rav's general approach to ambiguous terminology

in halacha, such as the undefined term “large distance,” was to be strict. He reasoned that if no specific shiur is given, it is difficult to reliably assess what is considered a large amount and what is considered a small amount of separation. Yet the consensus spanning the centuries might suggest that other poskim understood a *himnik* differently and would not be concerned by a split that is small in width.

The Chumra of the Magen Avraham

The Magen Avraham (s.k. 7) has an interesting stringency. He writes that even if the middle leaf is intact, a *himnik* can be a concern if it exists *next to the tiyomes*. There are two approaches in the poskim to interpreting the intent of the Magen Avraham's terse words.

1) The *Pri Megadim* (*Mishbetzos Zahav*, 8) understands that the Magen Avraham sees a *himnik* as problematic if the **shidra** alone is split, even if that split does not extend upwards to the middle leaf.⁶ That is not a common *p'sul* to encounter.

2) The *Mishna Berurah* (*Shaar Hatziyun* 33) understands that the Magen Avraham invalidates a lulav if



the **leaves next to the middle leaf** are split like a *himnik*.

There are two ways to possibly interpret the concern of the *Mishna Berurah*:

a) The *Mishna Berurah* might be expanding the *p'sul* of a *himnik* to the leaves around the central *tiyomes*.

b) Alternatively, the *Mishna Berurah* means that if the leaves next to the *tiyomes* form a fork-shaped formation, it is a problem of *himnik* — looking like a fork, even if none of the leaves are split.

Some contemporary seforim (*Sefer Arba'as Haminim Hashalem* by Rav Eliyahu Weissfish and *Sefer Daled Minim L'Mehadrin* by Rav Avraham Chaim Adas) rule that if the leaves next to the *tiyomes* are split like a *himnik*, there is a problem with using the lulav *l'chatchila*, in accordance with their interpretation of *Mishna Berurah's* understanding of the *Magen Avraham*. Yet other seforim (such as *Sefer Lekicha Tama* by Rav Avraham Reit) rule that one should ideally shy away from a lulav that has a few leaves that separate from each other like fork prongs, in accordance with the other interpretation of the *Mishna Berurah*. The latter approach seems to be concurred by the *Mishna Berurah* himself who exhorts purchasers to be careful not to cause a *Magen Avraham*-style *himnik* while they are examining lulav tops. It would seem more probable to understand that he is warning those perusing the lulavim not to separate the leaves from one another even though each leaf itself

remains intact. It is not as likely that the *Mishnah Berurah* means that one should be careful not to actively split the leaves around the lulav as he is examining the central leaf.

In Closing (Most of the Way)

In conclusion, there are two reasons to pursue a lulav with a closed top: to avoid the *p'sulim* of a mostly split lulav and of a lulav with a fork-shaped split. The *Shulchan Aruch* rules that a general split is only a problem if it is on all or most of the lulav leaves, which is uncommon. The Rama quotes that the Ashkenazic custom is to rule strictly even if only the middle leaf has a significant split. He then quotes that an ideal to strive for is to find a lulav that is not split at all. The *Taz* qualifies that to mean only if the split is larger than a *tefach*. Therefore, the *Mishna Berurah* suggests using a lulav that fulfills that ideal only if it is readily available. That seems to preclude investing large amounts of resources into procuring one.

The second reason to pursue a closed lulav is to avoid the *p'sul* of *himnik*, a fork split. The *poskim* rule that a fork split is a problem even if the length of the split is small, as long as it gives the appearance of a fork. Yet contemporary *poskim* emphasize that even though a fork split is a problem regardless of its length, it is only problematic if the distance between the two parts is significant. If there is a small separation and the split does not resemble a fork, the lulav would be kosher. Consequently, the concern

of a *himnik* does not require a person to pursue a completely closed lulav, as long as the split does not present itself as two disparate heads like the prongs of a fork.

May we speedily be privileged to bring lulavim that are *kosher l'mehadrin* in the newly rebuilt Beis Hamikdash for seven days in accordance with the Biblical requirement and rejoice with them on Sukkos in all of its glory.

Endnotes

- 1 Rif (*Sukkah* 15a in dapei haRif), Bahag (according to Rosh, *Sukkah* Perek 3 end of s"v 6 [with *Korban Nesanel's* emendation]), Rabbeinu Chananel (*Sukkah* 32a), Rambam (*Hilchos Lulav* 8:4), Raavad (*Lulav Hagadol* 26).
- 2 *Sukkah* 32a (d.h. *Nechlika*), *Bava Kamma* (96a *Nechlika*).
- 3 *Bava Kamma* *ibid*.
- 4 Rashi (32a), Rabbeinu Chananel (32a), Rosh (3:4), Rif (15a), *Aruch* (*Himnik*).
- 5 He does add that the *Chayei Adam* seems to disagree: רק דעת החיי אדם אינה כן שמפורש בלשונו בכלל קמ"ט סעיף י' שכתב אבל אם נתרוב הסדק עד שנראה הסדק וזהו שנקרא בגמ' שנסדק ומבואר שכל שנראה בו סדק נחשב לשיטתו כהימניק הפוסל.
- 6 The source of the *Magen Avraham's* ruling according to this approach would appear to be Rabbeinu Yerucham (*Nesiv* 8 Vol. 3 pg. 58c) quoted in the *Beis Yosef*, who writes: "ואם עשוי כהמניק פסול כשנסדקה גוף השדרה עם העלין של מטה ושני העלין האמצעיים לא נחלקו דאם נחלקו היינו נחלקה התיומת". This observation is made by the *Bikurei Yaakov*.



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The Sukkah Synthesis: A Sukkot Lesson from Avraham Avinu's Life

Sukkot is a funny thing. In the fall, we take ourselves out of the comfort of our own home for a week to sit in a decorated hut at the mercy of the weather. The hope is to transport ourselves back to the ancient days to relive the Jewish experience in the desert. On Pesach, we read the Hagadah to relive the Exodus, and on Shavuot we stay up all night to relive *Matan Torah* (Giving of the Torah at Sinai) — but on Sukkot we go so far as to build real-life structures outside and are then commanded to sit in them for seven days:

בַּסֻּכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל הָאִזְרָח בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשֵׁב בַּסֻּכּוֹת.

You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths.

Vayikra 23:42

We are expected to make this structure symbolically our “home” by eating meals, praying, resting, braving the elements, and sleeping within its walls. Isn't this taking things a bit too far?

מִשְׁרָשֵׁי הַמִּצְוָה. מֵה שִׁמְפָרֵשׁ בַּכְּתוּב, לְמַעַן נִזְכֵּר הַנְּסִים הַגְּדוּלִים שֶׁעָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים לְבְּרִיךְ הוּא לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בְּמִדְבַר בְּצֵאתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם שֶׁכַּחֲסֵם מַעֲנֵנִי כְבוֹד שֶׁלֹּא יִזְקֶה לָהֶם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּיוֹם וּקְרָה בְּלֵילָה. וְיֵשׁ שִׁפְרָשׁוֹ (סוּכָה יֵא, ב), שֶׁסֻּכּוֹת מִמֶּשׁ עָשׂוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִדְבַר, וּמִתּוֹךְ זִכִּירַת נִפְלְאוֹתָיו שֶׁעָשָׂה עִמָּנוּ וְעַם אֲבוֹתֵינוּ נִזְהָר בְּמִצְוֹתָיו בְּרִיךְ הוּא, וְנִהְיָ רְאוּיִים לְקַבֵּלֶת הַטּוֹבָה מֵאֵתוֹ, וְהוּא חִפְצוֹ בְּרִיךְ הוּא שֶׁחִפֵּץ לְהִיטִיב.

From the root of the mitzvah: What is



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explicit in the verse, to recall the great miracles that G-d performed for our forefathers in the wilderness as they left Egypt. He covered them in the Clouds of Glory so that the sun would not harm them during the day, or the ice at night. Some explain (Talmud, Sukkah 11b) that the Israelites made physical huts in the wilderness. Through recalling His wonders that He did for us and our forefathers we will be careful with His commandments, and we will be worthy of receiving good from Him. That is always His wish, to do good.

Sefer HaChinuch, mitzvah no. 325

As the *Sefer HaChinuch*¹ explains, the reason for actually building and sitting in the sukkah is to recreate the imagery of the Clouds of Glory, and to remember the great miracles and *chessed* (kindness and grace) that G-d performed for the Jews in the desert. As it states in the *Derech Hashem*:²

כִּי הִנֵּה עֲנֵנֵי הַכְּבוֹד שֶׁהִקִּיף הַקָּב"ה אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מְלִבְד וְתוֹעֵלֶתָם בְּגִשְׁמִיּוֹת שֶׁהִיָּה לְסִכְךָ עֲלֵיהֶם וְלִהְגֹן בְּעֵדָם ... שֶׁ"י הַעֲנָנִים הָהֵם, הֵיוּ נִמְצָאִים יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹבְדִלִים לְבָדָם וְנִשְׁוֹאִים מִן הָאָרֶץ ... נִבְדָּלִים מִכָּל הָעַמִּים וּמְנוֹשָׂאִים

וּמְנוֹשָׂאִים מִן הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה עֲצָמוּ ... וּמִתְחַדָּשׁ דְּבַר זֶה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחַג הַסֻּכּוֹת עַל יְדֵי הַסֻּכָּה. *The Ananaei Hakavod (Clouds of Glory) provided Bnei Israel (Nation of Israel) with both physical and spiritual protection. ... The clouds caused Bnei Israel to be separated from all other nations and through divine protection they were literally removed from the physical world. ... This is the historical and spiritual remembrance that is renewed every Sukkot through the sukkah itself.*

It is not enough for us to just read the story and feel thankful to G-d for protecting the children of Israel in dangerous conditions or believe that He can do it again. We need to bring ourselves out of the comforts of our homes, look up to the stars, and feel G-d's presence in our lives today. During the time of harvest, a farmer might come to think that he alone is responsible for the success of his crop and forget that G-d is the true benefactor. By sitting in the sukkah, we proclaim to G-d that we trust in Him and that He is the reason we have any of our physical comforts to

begin with. We feel His kindness and acknowledge His kindness, so we echo His benevolence to us.

There are two primary *middot* (character traits) that are reflected back to us by celebration of the sukkah. The first is the *middah* (character trait) of *chessed*, loving kindness. G-d gave us life, protection, and miracles. By physically sitting in the sukkah, we can look up to G-d and be grateful for all of his kindness toward us, and in turn, we can be more giving people. The second *middah* is that of *emunah*, faith. G-d had faith in us in the desert, and, therefore, He saved us. We, in turn, need to renew our faith in G-d by sitting in the sukkah and by remembering that everything comes from Him. This synthesis of *chessed* and *emunah* is the “Sukkah Synthesis.”

These two *middot*, *chessed* and *emunah*, are closely connected to Avraham Avinu (our forefather Abraham), the first of the seven *Ushpizin*. The *Ushpizin* are the seven supernal guests we invite to our sukkot, the seven “founding fathers,” also known as the “seven shepherds” of the Jewish people: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, Aaron, Yosef, and David. Avraham was the embodiment of the two qualities that reflect the intrinsic spiritual quality of the sukkah. The Rambam³ writes that one cannot experience the true joy of any Jewish holiday without opening one’s gates to welcome the underprivileged and downtrodden, providing them food and nourishment. Therefore, on Sukkot, we practice *hachnasat orchim*, welcoming guests into our homes, to both physical and spiritual guests. The sukkah is not meant to be a stand-alone home but a welcoming tent like that of Avraham. By welcoming Avraham as the first of

the *Ushpizin*, we celebrate Avraham as the personality who embodied both *middot* of the “Sukkah Synthesis.”

Avraham: Man of Chessed

From the moment we meet Avraham, we are informed of his giving nature. When G-d first came to Avraham and commanded him to leave his home,⁴ the Torah described Avraham taking his wife, his nephew Lot, all of their belongings, and those who were “made in Charan” on this journey. The Midrash⁵ tells us that Avraham converted the men and Sarah converted the women when they camped and as they traveled. Not only did Avraham care for and give to those they converted, but he opened up his home to his nephew Lot, despite their conflicting moral views. Avraham was a man who followed in G-d’s footprints of protection, giving, and kindness, and became His premier exponent.

In his introduction to Sefer Breishit (Book of Genesis), the Netziv⁶ notes that Sefer Breishit is sometimes called “*Sefer HaYashar*,” the Book of the “Upright.” In his explanation of this name, the Netziv explains that Sefer Breishit is not only the book of creation, but it is the book of our forefathers, all of whom were “*yashar*” (straight and upright) individuals with integrity. The Netziv cites many examples, but with regard to Avraham, he recounts Avraham’s debate with G-d to save the city of Sodom. This city was described in the Torah as a place of “*very evil and great sinners*,”⁷ and despite knowing this, Avraham stood overlooking Sodom and fought for their survival. This, says the Netziv, is what being *yashar* means: someone who will not settle for the acceptance of another’s punishment until they

know they’ve been given the full benefit of any doubt and they’ve given all their might to save them. Avraham is the *ish yashar*, the man on the straight path, the epitome of a man of *chessed*.

The Midrash⁷ further emphasizes the greatness of Avraham’s *chessed* in its description of the events following his circumcision. The Torah states that G-d appeared to Avraham in the “*heat of the day*.”⁸ The Midrash explains that G-d was coming to visit Avraham and perform the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*, visiting the sick, on the most painful day of recovery, the third day. In order to alleviate Avraham’s pain and knowing Avraham’s *middah* of *hachnasat orchim*, G-d brought out the sun in its fullest form to ensure that no one would be walking around, and Avraham could sit inside his tent and rest, instead of waiting in the heat for guests. The Midrash continues to explain that Avraham was so upset to see there were no visitors walking past his tent that G-d brought the angels in the form of people, so that Avraham could perform the mitzvah of *hachnasat orchim* on that day. Avraham never ceased doing *chessed*.

Furthermore, when Avraham welcomed the three angels to his home, he said that he would bring water for their feet and bread to satiate themselves.⁹ When he prepared the food, the Torah describes that instead of bread, Avraham brought the best and softest meat, cream, and milk — he brought a feast! Avraham was a man who exemplifies the mishna in *Pirkei Avot*,¹⁰ (*Ethics of the Fathers*), which states, “*say a little and do a lot*.” Not only does he bring them the best delicacies, but he involves his whole family in the process. The Midrash¹¹ describes that Avraham brought along Yishmael, his spiritually troubled

son, while gathering the guests their food, to train him in *mitzvot*. He was constantly doing and giving, only for the sake of Heaven, with little fanfare.

Although only a few examples are recounted here, Avraham was a man of consummate generosity, and always performing good deeds. G-d, in return, was constantly giving to him. G-d granted Avraham two children, a loving wife, money, security of his survival, and the eternity of the Jewish nation. It is from Avraham Avinu that we learn what it means to give, open our doors, and bring others to Torah and *mitzvot*. It is also through Avraham Avinu that we learn and see the great *chesed* G-d does for us in return for our generosity. The verb “to give” in Hebrew is נתן, (*natan*), which is a palindrome. When you give, it comes back in return. This is the first aspect of the “Sukkah Synthesis.”

Avraham: Man of Emunah

Not only was Avraham a man of *chesed*, but, in fact, he was the founder of *emunah*, faith in G-d. The Rambam writes about the days before monotheism:

ולא יודעו אלא יחידים בעולם כגון חנוך ומתושלח נח שם ועבר ועל דרך זה היה העולם הולך ומתגלגל עד שנולד עמודו של עולם והוא אברהם אבינו:

The Eternal Rock was not recognized or known by anyone in the world, with the exception of a few individuals: for example, Chanoch, Metushelach, Noach, Shem, and Ever. The world continued in this fashion until the pillar of the world — the Patriarch Abraham — was born.

Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 1:2

Avraham was the first, after many generations, to recognize G-d, and believe in His omnipotence. At that time, the population of Ur Kasdim,

including his father, who was a purveyor of idols, worshiped rocks, trees, and stars. Avraham saw beyond the stars, and recognized the creator and mover of the stars was G-d Himself. Avraham tried to convince everyone in Ur Kasdim that there was only one G-d, but to no avail. He was exiled from Ur Kasdim and thrown into the fiery furnace of King Nimrod, from which he escaped unscathed. The Midrash¹² recounts that while both Avraham and his brother Haran were sent by Nimrod into the trial of fire, only Avraham survived while Haran perished. If Haran had internalized Avraham’s teaching that there is only one G-d, perhaps he too would have been saved from the flames. Avraham’s *emunah* in G-d was reciprocated by G-d’s kindness and salvation.

Once Avraham established this faith, G-d tested him further. To be the “father of many nations,”¹³ and to be the pillar of *emunah*, Avraham needed to be tested, and fulfill his great potential.¹⁴ There were ten tests. When G-d told Avraham to leave his land,¹⁵ Avraham believed, without hesitation, that G-d would protect him on this journey, and that it would both pleasurable and good.¹⁶ When Avraham finally made it to Israel¹⁷ and was struck with famine, the Midrash¹⁸ explains that he moved down to Egypt, following the will of G-d. When Sarah was captured in Egypt,¹⁹ Avraham never lost sight of G-d’s salvation, and she was returned to him in good health. Upon hearing of his nephew’s captivity in Sedom,²⁰ Avraham gathered together a small army and entered the war of the four and the five kings with no fear, no trepidation, and no hesitation; only complete faith in G-d.

S’fat Emet on Avraham’s Connection to the Sukkah

ענין הליכה מבית לסוכה צא מדירת קבע כו'. הוא מעין מצוה ראשונה שנצטוו אברהם אע"ה לך לך מארצך. וכמו כן בבנ"י שנא' זכרתי לך חסד נעורייך כו' לכתך אחרי כו'. ובודאי אין יכולין לקיים זה כראוי רק בתחילתו. ולכן אחר יוהכ"פ שנעשים טהורים כקטן שנולד מתעורר זה הרצון בכל איש ישראל להיות נמשך אחר השי"ת. אחריו נרוצה. ומסתמא פ' חסד נעורייך הוא אברהם אבינו ראשיתן של ישראל.

The idea of going to the sukkah and leaving one’s permanent home is similar to the first commandment that Avraham Avinu was commanded (Bereishit 12:1): “Go for yourself from the land.” Similarly, regarding the Jewish people, it states (Yirmiyahu 2:2): “I remember the kindness (*chesed*) of your youth ... walk after Me [in the desert].” We certainly can only fulfill this at the beginning. Therefore, after Yom Kippur, when we have purified ourselves and are like a newborn child, each Jewish person is inspired to walk after God. “We will run after You” (Shir HaShirim 1:4). Ostensibly, the “kindness of your youth” refers to Avraham Avinu who was the beginning of the Jewish people.

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The tests continued when Sarah could not conceive a child,²¹ and Avraham took in Hagar, giving birth to his first son, Yishmael. The Midrash²² recounts that Avraham listened to the *Ruach HaKodesh*, the holy voice,

within Sarah, and only took in a new wife once he knew this was G-d's will. At the old age of 99, Avraham is commanded by G-d to circumcise himself and all men in his household,²³ which he does without question. Avraham instructs Sarah to lie about being his wife as they enter Grar,²⁴ and Avimelech takes her in as his wife, with Avraham patiently waiting for her return. When Sarah commands Avraham to expel Hagar and Yishmael from their home,²⁵ he turns to G-d in uncertainty. However, once again he's told to "listen to the voice of Sarah,"²⁶ and he immediately expels them. Last, when G-d commands Avraham in his tenth and final test to bring his beloved son Yitzchak as a human sacrifice,²⁷ Avraham wakes up early in the morning to complete this task with zeal. In fact, he is so zealous to follow the will of G-d, and complete his commandments, that he is about to kill his son when he is stopped by an angel. Through all ten tests, Avraham's faith in G-d never wavers. He proved himself to be the ultimate man of *emunah*. This is the second aspect of the "Sukkah Synthesis."

Striking the Synthesis

There is a unique and important connection between the two *middot* of *chessed* and *emunah*. With regard to mankind, Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski writes:²⁸

Chessed and emunah have a parallel relationship. To the degree that one possesses chessed, to that degree he can accept G-d as his sovereign, and subject himself to the will of G-d. Abraham's selflessness was so absolute that he became a bearer to the Divine presence.

From here we can learn true subservience to G-d is the wellspring

from which we learn to give to others. G-d gives and has faith in us, and, therefore, we too, need to give and believe.

With regard to G-d, it says in Tehillim (Psalms):

חֶסֶדִּי ה' עוֹלָם אֲשִׁירָה לְדוֹר וָדוֹר אֲדַבֵּר
אֲמִירָתְךָ בְּפִי.

The kindnesses of G-d I shall sing forever; to generation after generation I shall make known Your faithfulness with my mouth.

Tehillim 89:2

In this perek (chapter) of Tehillim, two critical qualities by which G-d has managed His relationship with the Jewish people and mankind in general are highlighted: *chessed* and *emunah*. *Chessed* is an expression of G-d's innate goodness, a quality of kindness that generates blessings for His creatures. *Emunah* is an expression of G-d's innate truth, the integrity that assures He will be faithful to His word. The original covenant with David was a product of G-d's *chessed*. The anticipated fulfillment of that covenant, even though delayed, will be a product of His *emunah*.

On the first night of Sukkot, we invite in Avraham, the man symbolizing both *chessed* and *emunah*. We transport ourselves back into his life, to remind ourselves about his strengths and to inspire ourselves to work on those very *middot*, the *middot* that both Avraham and the sukkah share. Each remind us of the *chessed* G-d does for man and the *chessed* that man can do for G-d's honor. Each remind us of the *emunah* G-d has in us and the *emunah* we must have in G-d. With greater *emunah*, this Sukkot, perhaps we can increase our *chessed* and invite one more person to our sukkah and enjoy a welcoming Sukkot filled with company and happiness. It

is our mission on Sukkot to reignite the *middot* of *chessed* and *emunah* within ourselves and complete the "Sukkah Synthesis."

Endnotes

- 1 *Book of Education*, Anon., 13th Century Spain.
- 2 *The Way of G-d*, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lutzatto, 1730's.
- 3 Rambam, *Hilchot Yom Tov*, 6:17.
- 4 Breishit 12:1.
- 5 *Breishit Rabbah* 39:14.
- 6 R. Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, 1816-1893.
- 7 *Breishit Rabbah* 48:9.
- 8 Breishit 18:1.
- 9 Breishit 18:5.
- 10 *Pirkei Avot* 1:15.
- 11 *Avot d'Rabbi Natan*, ch. 13.
- 12 *Breishit Rabbah* 38:13.
- 13 Breishit 17:4.
- 14 Ramban, 22:1.
- 15 Breishit 12:1.
- 16 Rashi 12:1.
- 17 Breishit 12:10.
- 18 *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer*, ch. 26.
- 19 Breishit 12:15.
- 20 Breishit 14:14.
- 21 Breishit 16:1.
- 22 *Breishit Rabbah* 45:2.
- 23 Breishit 17:7.
- 24 Breishit 20:1.
- 25 Breishit 21:10.
- 26 Breishit 21:12.
- 27 Breishit 22:1.
- 28 *Living Each Day*, Rabbi Abraham J. Twersky, page 361.

The Mitzvah of Chinuch: Lessons from the Mitzvos of Tishrei

There are a number of *mitzvos* that are unique to the month of Tishrei: shofar, fasting on Yom Kippur, sukka and lulav. While listening to the shofar is relatively easy for a child to perform, the other three *mitzvos* can be more challenging for children. As we explore the Talmudic discussions surrounding these three *mitzvos*, we can learn an important principle regarding *chinuch* (training) and the nature of a child's obligation to perform *mitzvos*.

Sukka

אמר רבי יהודה מעשה בהילני המלכה בלוד שהיתה סוכתה גבוהה מעשרים אמה והיו זקנים נכנסין ויוצאין לשם ולא אמרו לה דבר אמרו לו משם ראייה אשה היתה ופטורה מן הסוכה אמר להן והלא שבעה בנים הוּוּ לה ועוד כל מעשיה לא עשתה אלא על פי חכמים למה לי למיתני ועוד כל מעשיה לא עשתה אלא על פי חכמים הכי קאמר להוּו כי תאמרו בנים קטנים היו וקטנים פטורין מן הסוכה כיון דשבעה הוּו אי אפשר דלא הוּו בהוּו חד שאינו צריך לאמו וכי תימרו קטן שאינו צריך לאמו מדרבנן הוא דמחייב ואיהי בדרבנן לא משגחה ת"ש ועוד כל מעשיה לא עשתה אלא על פי חכמים.

Rabbi Yehuda said: There was an incident involving Hilani the queen in Lod who had a sukka higher than twenty cubits. The rabbis frequented the sukka and didn't say anything to her. [Chachamim] said to [Rabbi Yehuda]: Is that a proof [that a sukka can be higher than twenty?] Hilani was a woman and women are exempt from the mitzva of sukka. [R. Yehuda] said to them: Did she not have seven children? Furthermore,



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everything that she did was in accordance with the rulings of the rabbis. Why does it say, "Furthermore, everything that she did etc."? This is what R. Yehuda meant: If you tell me that the children were minors and minors are exempt from the mitzva of sukka, since there were seven children, it is impossible that there wasn't at least one who wasn't dependent on his mother [and therefore obligated to sit in the sukka]. And if you tell me that the obligation regarding a child who isn't dependent on his mother is only rabbinic in nature and she didn't follow rabbinic law, come and hear, furthermore, everything that she did was in accordance with the rulings of the rabbis.

Sukka 2b

Hilani the queen had a sukka higher than twenty *amos* in which her educable sons sat. Since she was scrupulous even regarding rabbinic obligations, such as training a child that he be accustomed to *mitzvos* (Rashi), her actions can be seen as proof that a sukka higher than twenty *amos* is valid.

R. Akiva Eger, *Gilyon Hashas* ad loc., asks a powerful question (*tzarich iyun gadol*). *Tosafos Yeshanim, Yoma* 82a, state that Hilani's obligation to train her children was a "*mitzva*

b'alma," a mere voluntary good deed, implying that there is no obligation of *chinuch* on the mother. This seems to contradict the Gemara's statement that Hilani was rabbinically obligated to train her sons. How can *Tosafos Yeshanim* state that her obligation was a *mitzva b'alma*?

The *Kehillos Yaakov, Sukka* no. 2, answers that there are two obligations of *chinuch*. The first is an obligation on the father. This is evidenced by his ability to impose the status of a *nazir* on his son, in order to train him for *mitzvos* (*Nazir* 28b). The Mishna states that a mother cannot impose the status of *nazir* on her son. The Gemara, *Nazir* 29a, explains that the difference between the father and the mother is that the father has an obligation to train his son in *mitzvos*. It is clear from the Gemara that only a father is obligated in this aspect of *chinuch*.

A second obligation of *chinuch* emerges from a comment of *Tosafos, Berachos* 48a-b. *Tosafos* cite Rashi that only the father is obligated to train his son. The son has no inherent obligation to perform the *mitzvos*. *Tosafos* disagree with Rashi and prove that the son himself is also obligated to perform the *mitzvos* when he

reaches the age of *chinuch*. Therefore, in addition to the father's obligation to train his children, the children also have their own obligation to perform mitzvos.

The *Kehillos Yaakov* suggests that Hilani, as a “*mitzva b'almah*,” saw to it that her sons would fulfill **their** inherent obligation to sit in the sukka. When the Gemara states that Hilani was scrupulous regarding rabbinic obligations, it is referring to her arranging that her sons fulfill their rabbinic mitzva properly. Arranging for her sons to fulfill their mitzva was a voluntary good deed, a *mitzva b'alma*.

Lulav

א"ר זירא לא ליקני איניש הושענא לינוקא
ביומא טבא קמא מ"ט דינוקא מקנא קני
אקניי לא מקני ואשתכח דקא נפיק בלולב
שאינו שלו.

R. Zeira said: Don't give (as a gift or sale) to a child [the four species] on the first day of Sukkos. Why not? Because a child can legally acquire but he cannot sell (or give a gift) and [the adult] will be attempting to fulfill the mitzva with a lulav that is not his.

Sukka 46b

Why would someone want to give the four species to a child as a gift? Ostensibly because on the first day of Sukkos, one must own the four species in order to fulfill the mitzva. There is a famous dispute as to whether a father can fulfill the mitzva of *chinuch* on the first day of Sukkos by lending his lulav to his son. As a matter of practical halacha, the *Mishna B'rura* (658:28 and *Sha'ar Hatziyun* 34) cites the *Magen Avraham*, *Pri Megadim* and *Chayei Adam*, who rule that the father does not fulfill the mitzva of *chinuch* since one cannot fulfill the mitzva on the first day with

Chinuch and Teaching Honesty

R. Zeira's instructions not to give (as a gift) the four species to a child are followed immediately by another directive of R. Zeira:

א"ר זירא לא לימא איניש לינוקא דיהיבנא לך מידי ולא יהיב ליה משום דאתי לאגמוריה שיקרא.
R. Zeira also said, Don't tell a child "I will give you something" and then fail to give it to him because it will cause him to learn how to lie. What is the connection between the two statements of R. Zeira? R. Yaakov Etlinger, *Aruch LaNer* ad loc., notes that on the one hand, the minor needs to own the lulav. On the other hand, once he acquires it, he can't transfer it back because a minor can't give something away. R. Etlinger suggests that there is ostensibly a simple solution to this problem: Give the lulav to the child and tell him that it is an absolute gift while having in mind that you are not really giving him a gift. The minor thinks that he owns the lulav, so from the perspective of the mitzvah of *chinuch*, he is being trained properly and the adult doesn't have to worry about the issue of reacquiring the lulav. The only problem is that at some point in the child's life, his father will have to teach him the halacha that one can't give a lulav to a child and the father will have to explain that all these years, he had been using this trick. The child will then conclude that we can use trickeries in everyday transactions as long as we don't lie explicitly. We don't want to send such a message to our children, and therefore, this solution should not be employed.

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a borrowed lulav (*Shulchan Aruch*, OC 658:3). Only one later authority (*Bigdei Yesha* cited in *Sha'ar Hatziyun* 35) disagrees.

However, the *Mishna B'rura* is inclined to be lenient based on early authorities, specifically the Mordechai (*Sukka* 759) and Ra'avan, the source of the ruling in *Shulchan Aruch*, OC 658:6, who state that it is fine (*shapir dami*) if the son takes the lulav without acquiring it. The *Mishna B'rura* explains (*Sha'ar Hatziyun* 36) that the mitzva of *chinuch* is on the mitzva itself, but not on the details of the mitzva.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe*, YD 1:234) explains that in order to accustom the son to perform mitzvos after becoming bar mitzva, a borrowed lulav suffices. However, if the nature of *chinuch* is that the son fulfills the

mitzva properly, the son must own the lulav himself.

The Ritva (*Sukka* 2b) cites a “mistaken” view that permits *chinuch* with a borrowed lulav. The Gemara that rules that a sukka which is too high is invalid for *chinuch* (in the case of Hilani) clearly rejects this view.

We can answer as follows: The father's obligation is to train his son. Any sukka or lulav suffices to accustom the son to perform mitzvos. However, the son's own obligation is to fulfill the mitzvos properly. Hilani, as a mother, only had a mitzva to assist her sons to perform their own obligation. Hence, an invalid sukka would have achieved nothing for Hilani. This is why the Gemara focused specifically on having a valid sukka. A father has the additional mitzva of training the child to become accustomed to performing

mitzvos. This aspect of *chinuch* can be achieved even if the lulav is borrowed. Therefore, it is preferred that the son own the lulav in order to achieve both aspects of *chinuch*. However, there is an aspect of *chinuch* that is achieved even with a borrowed lulav.

Yom Kippur

The Gemara (*Yoma* 82a) discusses *chinuch* for boys and girls regarding fasting on Yom Kippur. The Rambam (*Sh'visas Asor* 2:10) writes:

קטן בן תשע שנים וכן עשר שנים מחנכין אותו לשעות. כיצד היה רגיל לאכול בשתי שעות ביום מאכילין אותו בשלש. היה רגיל בשלש מאכילין אותו בארבע. לפי כח הבן מוסיפין לענות אותו בשעות. בן אחת עשרה שנה בין זכר בין נקבה מתענה ומשלים מדברי סופרים כדי לחנכו במצות.

A boy of 9 or 10 years should be trained for a few hours. How so? If he normally eats in the second hour of the day, he should eat in the third hour. If he normally eats in the third, he should eat in the fourth. Depending on the energy of the son, the number of hours should be increased. An 11 year old, whether a boy or a girl, should complete the fast because of the rabbinic mitzva to train the child to perform mitzvos.

The implication is that only a boy should fast for a few hours, but when they reach the age when they can fast the whole day, both boys and girls should fast. Rabbeinu Mano'ach ad loc., based on the language of the Gemara, *Yoma* 82a, (*trei chinuchei havu*), notes that there are two types of *chinuch*. One is a general obligation on all fathers to teach their sons Torah and

to train them in *mitzvos*. We see from the Gemara (*Nazir* 29a) which states that a father can only impose the *nazir* status on his son, not his daughter, that this general obligation doesn't apply to daughters. Therefore, there is no requirement for a daughter under 11 to fast at all. At age 11, there is a rabbinic obligation on boys and girls to fast the entire Yom Kippur. Boys and girls are treated equally. Both must fast according to rabbinic law. When the Rambam wrote that "a boy of 9 or 10 years should be trained for a few hours," he did not write "because of the rabbinic mitzva." There is no rabbinic mitzva to fast for a few hours. The mitzva is to fast all day and perform the mitzva according to all of its laws.

Rabbeinu Mano'ach's explanation reflects our earlier analysis. The Torah paradigm of teaching and training is limited to fathers and their sons (*Kiddushin* 29b). This allows for a borrowed lulav or a partial fast. The more rigorous obligation that applies equally to boys and girls is fulfilled only by fulfilling the mitzva according to all of its laws. Daughters age 11 are obligated to fast all day on Yom Kippur and mothers have a *mitzva b'alma* to ensure that their daughters and sons fulfill this obligation and perform all of the details associated with the mitzva.

The Ran (*Yoma* 3b) notes that a boy must fast all day two years before bar mitzva, and a girl only one year before bas mitzva:

ואע"פ שגדלותה של תינוקת קודם לזמן גדלותו של תינוק שנה אפ"ה לא ראו חכמים להחמיר על התינוקת יותר מן התינוק משום

דעיקר חינוך לתינוק הוא כדאמרין במסכת נזיר (דף כט א) בנו חייב לחנכו במצות בתו אינו חייב לחנכה.

Even though a girl reaches maturity a year before a boy, the rabbis did not want to impose a greater stringency on a girl because the primary obligation is for a boy, as it states in Masechet Nazir, one must train one's son to perform mitzvos and there is no obligation to train one's daughter.

The Ran adds that the year before bar or bas mitzva, there is a special status of "*mufla hasamuch l'ish*," which means that vows taken in that year are binding (*Nida* 45b-46a).

Perhaps what the Ran means is that a child's fast requires an acceptance for it to be meaningful. A girl, whose obligation is a function of the technical requirement to fast, begins only at age 11, when she is old enough to take a vow and old enough for her acceptance of the fast to be meaningful. For a boy, a fast at the age of 11 provides for two years of general training. At age 12, when he is old enough for his acceptance of the fast to be meaningful, he fasts all day, not to train but to fulfill his technical obligation.

In summary, a father is obligated to train his son, based on the Torah paradigm of teaching him Torah, even if the *mitzvos* can't be performed with all of their details. An additional aspect applies equally to sons and daughters, who are personally required to fulfill all details of the mitzva. Fathers and mothers alike are supposed to ensure and facilitate their complete observance of *mitzvos*.



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