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Adapted and translated from

ימים טובים בהלכה by Rav Yissocher Frand

Eating in the Sukkah When It Rains on the First Night

Why Rishonim Disagree About Mitzta'er on First Night of Sukkos

The Collision of Two Rules. Few halachos of Sukkos bring two basic principles into such sharp conflict as a rainy first night. During the rest of the festival, a person who is *mitzta'er*, sufficiently uncomfortable in the *sukkah*, is exempt. The reason is תשובה כעין תדורו - *one must dwell in the sukkah in the manner in which one ordinarily lives at home*. If a person would leave his house because of the conditions, the Torah does not require him to remain in the *sukkah*.

The first night seems to pull in the opposite direction. The Gemara (Sukkah 27a) derives from the parallel use of חמשה עשר regarding Sukkos and Pesach that the first night of Sukkos is like the first night of Pesach: מה להלן לילה - הראשון חובה מכאן ואילך רשות - *just as there the first night is obligatory and afterward optional, so too here the first night is obligatory and afterward optional*. The Torah therefore requires an act of eating in the *sukkah* on the first night.

Those two rules create the real question. Does *mitzta'er* remain an exemption even on the first night, so that the special first-night obligation exists only when ordinary *sukkah*-dwelling is possible? Or did the comparison to matzah create an independent obligation to eat the first *kezayis* in the *sukkah* even when a person would ordinarily be exempt? Rain is the classic test case, but the dispute is really about the nature of the first-night mitzvah itself.

What the Comparison to Matzah Adds. The discussion in Berachos 49b

helps sharpen the issue. The Gemara distinguishes Rosh Chodesh from Shabbos and Yom Tov in *Bircas HaMazon*. On Shabbos and Yom Tov, if one omitted the required insertion and has already passed the point at which it can be supplied, he must repeat *Bircas HaMazon*, because שבתות וימים טובים - *on Shabbos and Yom Tov one cannot simply refrain from eating*. Tosafos asks how that can be reconciled with the Gemara in Sukkah, which says that after the first night eating is optional.

One answer in Tosafos limits the Berachos obligation to the first nights of Pesach and Sukkos. Rabbeinu Yehudah, however, explains that bread is required on Yom Tov generally because of *simchas Yom Tov*. When the Gemara in Sukkah calls eating optional after the first night, it means optional as a matter of *sukkah*: if rain makes him a *mitzta'er*, he may eat the Yom Tov meal indoors. The first night is different. Tosafos concludes with unusually explicit language: בלילה ראשונה בכל ענין חובה ואפילו יורדין גשמים חייב לאכול כזית - *on the first night the obligation applies in every circumstance, and even when rain is falling one must eat a kezayis in the sukkah*.

The Ran reaches the same underlying problem from another direction. He takes the Gemara in Berachos at face value that Yom Tov generally requires bread. If so, the *gezeirah shavah* from matzah cannot merely be telling us to eat a Yom Tov meal. It must add something specifically about eating in the *sukkah*. The Ran records one view that the first night turns even a *kezayis*, ordinarily too small to constitute a fixed meal, into the required act of *sukkah*-eating. He then cites another view that goes directly to our question: שאפילו ירדו גשמים חייב לאכול בסוכה - *even if rain falls, one is obligated to eat in the sukkah*. In other words, the comparison to matzah may create not merely a meal, but a first-night obligation strong enough to survive the conditions that ordinarily excuse a person from the *sukkah*.

Does Mitzta'er Still Apply on the First Night? The Rishonim divide precisely at this point. Chachmei Lunel, quoted by the Meiri, formulate the stricter view in conceptual terms: בלילה הראשונה הואיל והכתוב קבעו לחובה כמצה - *on the first night, since the Torah established it as an obligation like matzah, one remains obligated*. Their argument is not simply that the first night is more important. Ordinarily, *mitzta'er* relieves a person from the continuing obligation to live in the *sukkah* under abnormal conditions. But the first night contains a distinct positive command to perform a particular act of eating there. If that command parallels matzah, personal discomfort does not necessarily erase it.

The Rashba understands the structure very differently. In a responsum addressing precisely a rainy or uncomfortable first night, he writes לעולם לא - *the Torah never required eating in the sukkah except in the manner in which a person normally eats at home*. Therefore הוא פטור הוא - *a mitzta'er remains exempt*. On this view, תשובה כעין תדורו is not merely a dispensation that can be overridden by a stronger obligation. It defines what the mitzvah of *yeshivas sukkah* is. The first-night *gezeirah shavah* makes eating obligatory, but it does not transform an act that is not normal dwelling into *yeshivas sukkah*.

The dispute can therefore be stated sharply. For the stricter Rishonim, the first night creates an independent *chovas achilah* in the *sukkah* and the ordinary personal exemption of *mitzta'er* does not cancel it. For the Rashba, *mitzta'er* is built into the very definition of the mitzvah; where the Torah says that one need not dwell, there is no first-night act of *sukkah*-dwelling to perform.

Why Rain Becomes a Separate Question. Rain now becomes more than a convenient example. The Rosh and the Tosafos in Berachos quoted above take the stringent principle to its apparent conclusion: even rain does not remove the first-night obligation. But another approach allows a person to eat indoors while the rain is actually falling and requires him to return to the *sukkah* if the rain later stops. That approach needs explanation. If the first night overrides *mitzta'er*, why should rain be treated differently from cold, a foul smell, or another source of discomfort?

The Gra provides the key distinction. His practice is recorded in Maaseh Rav (217): while rain is actually falling one should not eat in the *sukkah*, דאז איין - *because at that moment it does not have the status of a usable*

sukkah for this purpose. The point should not be pressed into saying that rain somehow makes the structure halachically nonexistent. It is narrower and more intuitive. Ordinary *mitzta'er* may describe a problem with the person: the *sukkah* is functioning normally, but he cannot comfortably remain there. Heavy rain can describe a problem with the dwelling itself: it is no longer functioning as the kind of residence contemplated by תשובו כעין תדורו. That distinction explains how one could hold that ordinary personal discomfort does not defeat the first-night obligation and still hesitate to require eating while rain is actually entering the *sukkah*. The first-night command may override an exemption belonging to the person; it cannot necessarily turn a place that is not functioning as a normal dwelling into an act of *yeshivas sukkah*. This is also why the question of what happens when the rain stops is so revealing.

If the Rain Stops. Suppose rain is falling at the beginning of the night, a person eats his Yom Tov meal indoors, and later the rain stops. The ordinary Yom Tov meal has been eaten, but the special first-night act may still be outstanding. On the approach that permits eating indoors during the rain, the obligation was not cancelled; it simply could not yet be performed in its proper setting. Once the *sukkah* again functions as a dwelling, the first-night obligation can be performed.

This distinction between the Yom Tov meal and the first-night *sukkah* obligation is crucial. It explains why a person who has already eaten and bentched indoors may still have to eat again in the *sukkah* after the rain stops. The meal was complete, but the separate first-night mitzvah was not. **The Practical Halachah.** The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 639:5) states the ordinary rule simply: ירדו גשמים הרי זה נכנס לתוך הבית - *if rain falls, one enters the house*. The Rema immediately distinguishes the first night: אבל - *on the first night one must eat a kezayis in the sukkah even if rain is falling*. The Rema thus gives practical weight to the Rosh, Ran and other Rishonim who understand the first-night obligation as surviving the usual exemption.

The Mishnah Berurah (639:35-36) emphasizes that major Rishonim hold that the exemption of *mitzta'er* applies even on the first night. The case is therefore treated as a genuine *safek*. One should eat the required first-night amount in the *sukkah* to satisfy the stringent view, but should not recite *leishev baSukkah*, because ספק ברכות להקל - *in a doubt concerning berachos we rule leniently*.

[CS: The Mishnah Berurah (639:35) cites a view that one should wait until *chatzos* for the rain to stop, but notes that the Eliyah Rabbah and Pri Megadim require waiting only an hour or two, and that delaying the family's meal excessively can itself detract from *simchas Yom Tov*. The latter view is generally relied upon in most communities.]

We explained the approach of Tosafos that if a person ate indoors while the rain was falling and the rain later stops, he must return to the *sukkah* and eat there. The reason is that although he has already eaten his Yom Tov meal, the special first-night obligation of eating in the *sukkah* remains unfulfilled.

[CS: The Mishnah Berurah (639:36) adds that even if he has already bentched, he should return to the *sukkah*, recite *leishev baSukkah*, and eat slightly more than a *kebeitzah*, in order to satisfy the opinions that the eating during the rain did not fulfill the first-night obligation. If he has already gone to bed, however, he need not get up.]

What the Machlokes Is Really About. The rainy first night of Sukkos is therefore not an isolated technical problem. It exposes three different ways of thinking about the mitzvah. First, what did the *gezeirah shavah* from matzah create: merely a requirement to eat, or an independent obligation to perform a particular act of eating in the *sukkah*? Second, what is *mitzta'er*: an exemption from an otherwise existing mitzvah, or part of the Torah's definition of what *yeshivas sukkah* means? And third, what is rain: simply another cause of personal discomfort, or a condition in which the *sukkah* itself is no longer functioning as normal residence?

Once those questions are separated, the Rishonim no longer appear to be giving disconnected rulings. The stringent view follows naturally if the first night creates an independent command that can override ordinary personal

discomfort. The Rashba follows naturally if תשובו כעין תדורו defines the mitzvah even on the first night. And the Gra's treatment of rain becomes understandable if rain can affect not merely the comfort of the person, but the very character of the dwelling. The practical *safek* preserved by the Mishnah Berurah is therefore the final expression of a much deeper question: what exactly did the Torah command when it made the first night of Sukkos a night of obligatory eating in the *sukkah*.

IS SUKKOT A HUT, A CLOUD, OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Adapted from a lecture given by **Rabbi Moshe Y. Shulman**¹ for **Torah in Motion**

A Hut or a Cloud? There is a basic question about Sukkot that we probably think we know the answer to because we have heard the answer so many times. The Torah tells us, בסכת תשבו שבעת ימים כל האזרח בישראל ישבו בסכת למען - *You shall dwell in sukkos for seven days so that your generations will know that I caused Bnei Yisrael to dwell in sukkos when I brought them out of the land of Egypt* (Vayikra 23:42-43). The Torah does not simply command us to sit in the *sukkah*. It tells us that there is something we are supposed to *know* when we sit there, למען ידעו דרתיכם, - *so that your generations will know*. That makes the historical meaning of the *sukkah* unusually important. What exactly are we supposed to know? What event are we reenacting? What were these sukkos in which Hashem says He caused Bnei Yisrael to dwell? The well-known answer begins with the Gemara in Sukkah 11b: כי בסכות הושבתי - *I caused Bnei Yisrael to dwell in sukkos: they were Clouds of Glory, according to Rabbi Eliezer; Rabbi Akiva says that they made actual sukkos*. That is the familiar dispute: were they *ananei hakavod*, the miraculous Clouds of Glory, or סוכות ממש, actual physical sukkos?

The meaning is part of the mitzvah. The Tur adopts the first approach and explains that the sukkos mentioned by the Torah were the Clouds of Glory with which Hashem surrounded Bnei Yisrael, שרבו ושמם - *so that the intense heat and sun would not strike them*. The purpose of our *sukkah* is therefore *so that we remember His wonders and awesome deeds* (Tur, Orach Chaim 625). The Shulchan Aruch (1488 to 1575) follows this formulation as well and identifies the sukkos with the *ananei hakavod* that surrounded and protected Israel (Orach Chaim 625). The Bach (Rav Yoel Sirkis 1561-1640) makes the point even sharper. Normally, knowing the historical reason behind a mitzvah may deepen its performance, but here the Torah itself says למען ידעו. Therefore, says the Bach, one has not performed the mitzvah *properly* - without knowing the meaning of the *sukkah*. He explains that עיקר הכוונה בשיבת הסוכה - *the central intention in sitting in the sukkah is to remember Yetziat Mitzrayim* (Bach, Orach Chaim 625). So this is not simply a nice explanation to tell over on Sukkot. According to the Bach, the Torah

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itself wants the person sitting in the sukkah to understand what the sukkah means.

But already the sources are more complicated than the way we normally present the issue. The Sifra records the same basic dispute with the names reversed: רבי אליעזר אומר סוכות ממש היו רבי עקיבא אומר בסוכות ענני כבוד היו – Rabbi Eliezer says they were actual sukkos, while Rabbi Akiva says they were Clouds of Glory (Sifra, Emor 12:17). The Mechilta similarly attributes סוכות ממש to Rabbi Eliezer and *ananei hakavod* to Rabbi Akiva (Mechilta de-Rabbi Yishmael, Bo 14). The attribution is therefore not completely uniform, but for our purposes the more important question is not which Tanna held which view. The deeper question is what the two views mean. The *ananei hakavod* are easy enough to understand as something worth commemorating. Hashem miraculously protected an entire nation traveling through the desert. But what are we commemorating according to the opinion that סוכות ממש עשו – they simply built huts? People traveling through a wilderness need shelter. They construct temporary dwellings. Why should an ordinary practical response to desert conditions become a mitzvah observed by Jews thousands of years later? If the sukkos were merely huts, what exactly are we supposed to remember about them?

Why commemorate an ordinary hut? The Rashbam answers that question in a way that changes the focus of Sukkot entirely. He begins with the agricultural setting of the chag. Sukkot comes מגרן ומיקבך, when a person has gathered in the produce of his threshing floor and winepress. The crop has succeeded. The grain is stored. The wine is ready. The house is full. At precisely that moment, says the Rashbam, the Torah tells him to leave his solid house and live in a temporary sukkah, למען תזכור כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל במדבר ארבעים שנה בלא יישוב ובלא נחלה – *so that you will remember that I caused Bnei Yisrael to live in sukkos in the wilderness for forty years, without permanent settlement and without an inheritance*. Why remember that precisely when the harvest is safely gathered? ומתוך כך תתנו הודאה למי – *as a result, you will give thanks to the One Who gave you an inheritance and houses filled with all good things*. And the Rashbam concludes with the Torah's warning, ולא תאמרו בלבבכם כחי ועוצם ידי – *do not say in your heart: my strength and the power of my hand made this prosperity for me* (Rashbam, Vayikra 23:43). According to the Rashbam, then, the very ordinariness of the original sukkah is the point. A person living in a secure house, surrounded by the produce of his land, needs to remember a time when the Jewish people had neither houses nor fields nor a permanent inheritance. The sukkah is the contrast to the settled home. It reminds us that what now seems permanent was once completely absent, and that the security we enjoy is not something we created entirely by ourselves.

A different significance of סוכות ממש. Rabbeinu Bachya (1255–1340) develops another aspect of the same opinion. If Bnei Yisrael lived in actual sukkos, he explains, then the mitzvah is intended to publicize גדול מעלתן של – *the extraordinary greatness of Israel in the wilderness*. An entire nation traveled through the desert with men, women and children in a place where naturally human beings cannot live. He cites the descriptions ארץ ציה ושמה בשרים – *a parched and desolate land* – and לא מקום זרע ותאנה וגפן – *not a place of seed, figs or vines* (Rabbeinu Bachya, Vayikra 23:43). So the Rashbam and Rabbeinu Bachya read the same physical sukkah in two somewhat different ways. The Rashbam emphasizes what Israel lacked: no home, no land, no stable economy, no permanent settlement. Rabbeinu Bachya emphasizes what Israel possessed: the extraordinary willingness to follow Hashem into a place where ordinary human life should have been impossible. The hut itself was not miraculous. What was remarkable was a people willing to live in those huts and continue into the wilderness because Hashem led them there.

But did they actually live in sukkos? That already gives us a much richer understanding of סוכות ממש, but there is a difficulty that forces us to look more closely at the biblical descriptions of life in the desert. If Bnei Yisrael spent forty years living in sukkos, why does the Torah repeatedly tell us that they lived in *ohalim*? When the manna falls, Moshe says תקחו באהלו תקחו –

– *each man shall take for those in his tent* (Shemot 16:16). When Moshe goes out to the Ohel Moed after the sin of the Golden Calf, יקומו כל העם ויצבו – *all the people would rise and stand, each man at the entrance of his tent* (Shemot 33:8). When the people complain in the episode of the meat, וישמע משה את העם בכה למשפחתיו איש לפתח אהלו – *Moshe heard the people crying, family by family, each man at the entrance of his tent* (Bamidbar 11:10). During Korach's rebellion, Moshe tells the people סורו נא מעל אהלי – *move away from the tents of these wicked men* (Bamidbar 16:26). Even at the end of the journey, as the nation prepares to cross the Jordan, Yehoshua describes לעבר את הירדן – *the people traveling from their tents to cross the Jordan* (Yehoshua 3:14). Again and again, the ordinary dwelling of the people is called an *ohel*. That does not make סוכות impossible, and the terms need not be mutually exclusive in every context, but it certainly makes us stop. If the Torah wanted us to remember that the people spent forty years living in physical sukkos, it is striking that when Tanach casually describes their homes, the repeated word is *ohel*.

The Rokeach's surprising answer. The Rokeach (Rav Eleazar of Worms - 1176–1238) cites an interpretation according to which the sukkos mentioned by the Torah were not the ordinary homes of Bnei Yisrael throughout the forty years in the wilderness at all. They were military shelters used later, as the Jewish people began fighting their way toward Eretz Yisrael: כשצרו על – *when they besieged the land of the Amorites of Sihon and Og and the fortified cities of the Land of Canaan, Israel then lived in sukkos* (Rokeach, Hilchot Sukkot 219). In other words, סוכות ממש may refer not to forty years of domestic life but to the temporary shelters of a nation on military campaign. The Rokeach has a striking biblical precedent for using the word *sukkah* this way. When David HaMelech brings Uriah home from the battlefield and expects him to go home to his wife, Uriah refuses. How can he enjoy the comforts of his house while the nation remains at war? He says, הארון ויהודה ישיבים – *the Aron, Israel and Yehudah are dwelling in sukkos, and my master Yoav and my master's servants are encamped in the open field* (II Shmuel 11:11). There the word *sukkos* clearly describes the temporary shelters of soldiers in the field. We find a similar usage in the war between Ben-Hadad and Israel, where Ben-Hadad and the kings with him are drinking בפסות while the army prepares for battle against Shomron (I Melachim 20:12, 16). Here too, sukkos are associated with a military encampment.

When does Yetziat Mitzrayim end? If that is the background, the *Rokeach* is proposing something quite remarkable. The Torah's statement כי בסוכות הושבתי – *when I brought them out of Egypt*. The wars against Sihon and Og took place in the fortieth year. How can an event forty years later still be called part of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*? The Rokeach answers that question directly. As long as the people had not yet conquered and divided the Land, the entire process could still be called *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. He points to the Torah's own language concerning territory conquered from Sihon, בצאתם ממצרים ובני ישראל בהצאתם ממצרים – *which Moshe and Bnei Yisrael defeated when they came out of Egypt*. Those battles took place in the fortieth year, yet the Torah itself calls them ממצרים. *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, in this usage, is therefore not merely the moment the people walked through the gates of Egypt. It is the larger historical movement from slavery to national independence and settlement.

That changes the meaning of the sukkah again. The sukkah becomes the dwelling of a people who are no longer slaves, but are not yet settled. They have left Egypt, but they have not yet reached the security of a permanent home in their Land. The sukkah is the architecture of transition. And the Rokeach explains why that transition must be remembered: שלא יחשבו

מאבותינו אברהם ויצחק ויעקב אנהנו יושבים בארץ אלא ידעו שיצאו ממצרים וצרו על הערים – *they should not think: we live in the Land simply because of our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov; rather, they should know that they left Egypt, besieged the cities, and Hashem delivered those cities into the hands of Israel* (Rokeach, Hilchot Sukkot 219). This is very close to the Rashbam, but it is not quite the same. The Rashbam is concerned about the individual looking at his prosperity and saying *my own power produced all of this*. The Rokeach is concerned about a people looking at an established national existence and forgetting the historical process by which it arrived there. The covenant with Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov is real, but possession of the Land did not simply descend automatically from the Avos to their descendants. There was Egypt. There was redemption. There was wilderness. There were battles. There were encampments outside fortified cities. And there was Divine assistance in turning a former slave nation into a people settled in its own Land. The sukkah tells the settled Jew not to erase the road that led to settlement. **The first Sukkot.** But the Rokeach has another passage that takes us in a different direction. He returns to the very first journey out of Egypt and writes, ומרעמסס באו לסכות על אותן סכות היה רבי אליעזר אומר סכות ממש היה רבי, וייעקב נסע סכות ויבן לו בית – *from Ramses they came to Sukkot; concerning those sukkot Rabbi Eliezer said they were actual sukkos, while Rabbi Akiva said they were Clouds of Glory* (Rokeach, Hilchot Sukkot 219). That is a striking formulation because the Rokeach connects the dispute about the sukkot in our verse must be a thing, either huts or Clouds of Glory. But in Shemot, Sukkot appears to be a place.

Hut, cloud, or location? That brings us back to the Mechilta, which on יסעו בני ישראל מרעמסס סכות – *they were actual sukkos*. He proves that *sukkot* can mean physical huts from the story of Yaakov: *Yaakov traveled to Sukkot; he built himself a house and made sukkot for his livestock, and therefore he called the name of the place Sukkot* (Bereishit 33:17). Rabbi Akiva says אין סוכות אלא מקום שנאמר ויסעו מסוכות ויהנו באיתם מה – *Sukkot means the Clouds of Glory*. But the Chachamim offer a third interpretation: אין סוכות אלא מקום שנאמר ויסעו מסוכות ויהנו באיתם מה – *Sukkot means nothing other than a place, as it says: They traveled from Sukkot and encamped at Etham. Just as Etham is a place, so Sukkot is a place* (Mechilta de-Rabbi Yishmael, Bo 14). That is the third possibility: hut, cloud, or location.

At first glance, the opinion of the Chachamim seems to remove almost all the religious significance. If Sukkot is simply the name of a place, what is there to commemorate? Bnei Yisrael left Ramses and traveled to a location called Sukkot. Why would that become the background to a mitzvah observed for all generations? But perhaps that question is precisely what makes the opinion so interesting. The Torah says *Bnei Yisrael journeyed from Ramses to Sukkot*. Ramses represents the world from which they are emerging. It is one of the central names associated with Egyptian servitude. Now, for the first time, an entire nation moves away from that world. The Chizkuni emphasizes Ramses as the place from which they emerged into freedom (Chizkuni, Shemot 12:37). Before Kriat Yam Suf, before Sinai, before the manna, before the Mishkan and before Eretz Yisrael, the first movement of the Jewish people as a free nation is *from Ramses to Sukkot*. Perhaps Sukkot, then, is not important because something spectacular happened there. It is important because it is the first place on the other side of slavery.

The geography of freedom. A slave may be legally released at a particular instant, but a people must actually begin to move away from the world that enslaved them. ויסעו – *they traveled*. They left the place in which their identity had been defined by someone else. Their first destination was Sukkot. And now the three interpretations in the Mechilta are not as unrelated as they first seemed. What does freedom require? According to one

view, סוכות ממש: the willingness to leave permanent structures behind and live temporarily, dependent upon Hashem. According to Rabbi Akiva, *ananei hakavod*: Divine protection that allows the people to survive the journey. And according to the Chachamim, Sukkot is a *makom*: freedom begins by leaving one place and entering another. The sukkah, in that sense, is not simply a house of a particular construction. It represents the condition of a people moving between worlds.

From Egypt to Zion. That also helps us appreciate something unusual in Rabbi Akiva's proof for the *ananei hakavod*. The Mechilta does not stop with the past. It turns to Yeshayahu's vision of the future: *over all the glory there will be a canopy, followed by וסכה תהיה לצל יומם מהרב – there will be a sukkah for shade from the heat by day, and for shelter and refuge from storm and rain* (Yeshayahu 4:5–6). And then the Mechilta adds the verse *those redeemed by Hashem will return, and they will come to Zion in joy, with everlasting happiness upon their heads* (Yeshayahu 35:10). Think about the sweep of that Mechilta. It begins with the first journey out of Egypt, מרעמסס סכות. It speaks of the Divine protection associated with the journey through the wilderness. And suddenly it is speaking about the future return to Zion. The sukkah is placed in the middle of the entire story. At one end is Ramses, slavery and the first departure. At the other end is ובאו ציון – *they will come to Zion in joy*. Between the two is the sukkah, a structure that by definition is not quite permanent, the dwelling of people who are still on a journey.

One sukkah, many dimensions. Perhaps that is the common denominator of all these explanations. The *ananei hakavod* tell us that the Jewish people could not have survived the journey without Hashem's protection. The Rashbam's physical sukkah tells us not to mistake present prosperity for something we created entirely by ourselves. Rabbeinu Bachya's sukkah reminds us of the faith of a generation willing to enter a wilderness in which ordinary human life was impossible. The Rokeach's military sukkah recalls the point at which *Yetziat Mitzrayim* was being completed, when a former slave nation lived in temporary shelters while fighting its way toward settlement. And the Chachamim's Sukkot as a place takes us back to the very first station, the first movement away from Egypt. These are not necessarily competing philosophical explanations of the mitzvah, but they all expose a different dimension of what a sukkah represents: protection without permanence, movement without yet having arrived, and the refusal to confuse the security of the present with the way Jewish history actually unfolded.

למען ידעו דורותיכם – *so that your generations will know*. A permanent house can make us forget how we arrived there. Once a person is settled, the journey can begin to look unnecessary. The house seems natural. The field seems natural. The country seems natural. The life we have now begins to look as though it was always there. For seven days the Torah tells us to leave that illusion. We remember the *ananei hakavod*. We remember סוכות ממש. We remember the people who had no settled inheritance. We remember those who followed Hashem into the wilderness. We remember the soldiers encamped outside cities they had not yet conquered. We remember that the fortieth-year battles could still be called *בצאתם ממצרים* because leaving Egypt was a process, not merely a date on the calendar. And we remember the very first יסעו, when Bnei Yisrael moved from Ramses toward a place called Sukkot. The sukkah is not merely a memorial to one object that existed somewhere in the desert. It is a memorial to the Jewish journey from dependence upon Egypt to dependence upon Hashem, from slavery toward freedom, from homelessness toward inheritance, and ultimately from exile toward return. The structure is temporary, but the journey it represents is the story of Jewish history.

Adapted and translated from

חלק א' – מועדים וזמנים by Harav Moshe Shternbach (b. 1926)

The Naanuim of the Lulav: Netilah and Hallel

The Brisker Rav: Naanuim Are Part of Netilas Lulav. The Brisker Rav,

Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveichik (1868-1959), derived an important principle from the Rambam's description of *netilas lulav*. The Rambam writes that the mitzvah in its proper form includes moving the Four Species outward and back and upward and downward. Rav Shternbuch summarizes the Brisker Rav's point in unusually direct language: *הרי מבואר שמצות נענועים שייך לנטילה - it is clear that the mitzvah of naanuim belongs to the netilah, and through it netilas lulav is performed in its proper form*. The *naanuim* are therefore not necessary for basic *yetziah*, but they belong to the proper performance of the *netilah* itself. That produces the Brisker Rav's practical ruling: ולכן חידש מרן זצ"ל שצריכים - *therefore he ruled that one should be particular to perform the naanuim with that same lulav*. Rav Shternbuch explains that the same principle applies where the *naanuim* in *Hallel* are the *naanuim* through which the original *netilah* is being completed *kehilchasah*.

The Extra Tefach of the Lulav. Rav Shternbuch next points to the halachic measurement of the *lulav*. The *hadasim* and *aravos* require three *tefachim*, while the *lulav* must extend an additional *tefach*. The Gemara explains the added length with the words *כדי לנענע בו* - *so that one can wave it*. Rav Shternbuch treats this as evidence that the capacity for *naanuim* is built into the halachic form of the *lulav*, not merely added afterward as an unrelated ceremony. He therefore writes: *ומבואר שבעינין לכתחילה נענועים לעיקר מצות נטילה - it is clear that, lechatchilah, naanuim are required as part of the primary mitzvah of netilah*. The point is not that one who omitted them was not *yotzei*, but that a proper *netilah* includes them.

Why Chinuch Begins When a Child Knows How to Wave. The Mishnah's rule concerning a child becomes strong evidence for this conception. Rav Shternbuch writes: *קטן היודע לנענע חייב בלולב ומשמע שנענועים מעיקר מצות נטילה - a child who knows how to perform the naanuim is obligated in lulav; this implies that naanuim belong to the primary mitzvah of netilah, and a child who cannot yet perform the mitzvah properly is not yet obligated*. The Mishnah does not make *chinuch* depend merely on the child's ability to lift the Four Species, even though lifting is sufficient for an adult's basic *yetziah*. Rav Shternbuch explains the reason in terms of *chinuch*: *דמאחר ששורש חיוב קטן במצות היא בגדר חינוך שיתרגל - the root of a child's obligation is chinuch, training him to perform the mitzvahs as he will when he is older*. *Chinuch* therefore begins when he can perform *netilas lulav* in its prescribed form, not merely its minimum *bedieved* form.

Three Movements in Each Direction. Rav Shternbuch also uses this approach to explain why the Rishonim rule stringently concerning the Yerushalmi's doubt whether one must perform three movements in each direction. Ordinarily we would expect *safek derabbanan lekula*. But here the *naanuim*, although rabbinic, are not simply an unrelated rabbinic act. They are the preferred completion of the *netilah*. Rav Shternbuch therefore characterizes them as *מצוה מן המובהר לגמר הנטילה - the preferred performance through which the netilah is brought to completion in its proper form*.

Which Naanuim? A second question then arises. There are *naanuim* associated with the initial taking and *berachah*, and there are *naanuim* during *Hallel*. Are the later *Hallel naanuim* always a separate rabbinic obligation? Rav Shternbuch says this is not clear. The Rambam does not expressly describe a separate set of *naanuim* immediately after the *berachah*; he describes the movements and then identifies their place in *Hallel*. Thus, if a person takes the Four Species shortly before *Hallel* and has not yet performed the *naanuim*, the *Hallel naanuim* can themselves be the *naanuim* through which his *netilah* becomes *mitzvah kehilchasah*. But if he took the Four Species earlier and already performed the full *naanuim*, Rav Shternbuch suggests that the later waving in *Hallel* may have a different status. He writes that one who took and waved before *davening* *יצא כבר בזה - has already fulfilled the mitzvah in its preferred form*, and the later *Hallel naanuim* may be only *minhag*.

The Raavyah and the Rosh. Rav Shternbuch finds what he calls strong support for this distinction in the Rishonim: ומצאתי מקור נאמן לסברתינו - שהנענועים דהלל אינם חיוב מדרבנן שהראב"י מבא בשם הראב"י שבנענועים דהלל סגי

I found reliable support for our view that the Hallel naanuim are not a rabbinic obligation: the Rosh cites the Raavyah (Rabbi Eliezer ben Yoel HaLevi c. 1140-1225) that in Hallel a simple waving suffices, while at the berachah one performs the full three movements outward and back. Rav Shternbuch adds that the Rosh records this view without objection. The differing form of the two sets of *naanuim* supports his suggestion that the first are the principal *naanuim* completing *netilas lulav*, while the later *Hallel naanuim*, once that obligation has already been fulfilled, may be rooted in *minhag* rather than in a second full rabbinic obligation.

The Chofetz Chaim. Rav Shternbuch in a footnote adds a striking report concerning the Chofetz Chaim (1838-1933) during the war, when *esrogim* were unavailable in Russia. He writes: *השיג אתרוג משנה שעברה לצאת בו ולא - השתמש בו אלא לברכה לבד ולא לנענועים בשעת הלל - he obtained an esrog from the previous year with which to fulfill the mitzvah, but used it only for the berachah and not for the naanuim during Hallel*. Rav Shternbuch explains that the Chafetz Chaim refrained from the additional waving because others had no *esrog* and seeing him perform the extra *naanuim* would cause them pain. The inference Rav Shternbuch draws is explicit: *הרי שלדעתו הנענועים - בהלל אינם חיובא מדינא רק שורשם מנהג בעלמא - this shows that in his view the Hallel naanuim are not an obligation by law, but are rooted in minhag*.

The Shaagas Aryeh. The *Shaagas Aryeh* (Rav Aryeh Leib Gunzburg 1695-1785), however, appears to point in the other direction. Rav Shternbuch quotes him: *שאגת אריה מביא דאסור להוציא לולב לאחר שיצא כדי לקיים מצות נענועים - the Shaagas Aryeh rules that one may not carry a lulav after already fulfilling the mitzvah merely in order to perform the Hallel naanuim, because a rabbinic mitzvah is not considered a Yom Tov need*. Rav Shternbuch comments: *ומשמע מדבריו שנענועים רק חיוב - his words imply that the Hallel naanuim are a rabbinic obligation, and this is difficult*. Rav Shternbuch's difficulty is that the primary *naanuim* are more than an ordinary rabbinic practice: they are what make the *netilah kehilchasah*. And once those principal *naanuim* have already been performed, the later *Hallel naanuim* may be less, not more, obligatory: *all the more so the Hallel naanuim, which may be only minhag*. He nevertheless notes that this does not necessarily decide the separate law of *hotza'ah*, because even an accepted *minhag* may provide sufficient Yom Tov purpose for carrying.

Rav Shternbuch's Conclusion. Rav Shternbuch ultimately distinguishes the cases. First: *ולע"ד יוצא מכל מה שביארנו שאם מברך לפני התפלה לצאת חובת המצוה - if one makes the berachah before davening in order to fulfill the mitzvah and also performs the naanuim, he has thereby fulfilled the principal form of the mitzvah*. In that case, *ואז כשנוטל עוד פעם להלל - when he takes the lulav again for Hallel, the later naanuim are rooted in minhag*. But if he did not perform *naanuim* earlier and instead takes the *lulav* before *Hallel*, Rav Shternbuch says: *משאיכ"א לא נענע - by contrast, if he did not wave before davening and takes the lulav before Hallel in order to perform the principal mitzvah, then - לפני התפלה רק נוטל לפני הלל לקיים עיקר מצות לולב אז מקיים בנענועים עיקר מצות נטילה לולב כהלכתה - through those naanuim he performs the principal mitzvah of netilas lulav in its proper form*.

This also sharpens the Brisker Rav's ruling about using the same Four Species. Where the *naanuim* are the *naanuim* completing the original *netilah*, they should be performed with the same *lulav* and *esrog*. If the principal *naanuim* were already performed earlier, however, the later *Hallel naanuim* may be only *minhag*, and the same-set requirement is correspondingly less clear. Rav Shternbuch ends cautiously: *ועדיין צ"ב בפוסקים - the matter still requires clarification from the Poskim*.

Adapted and translated from

רוח אליהו על המועדים (published Sept. 2026)

by Rav Elya Svei (1924-2009)

Succos: Leaving the Permanent Dwelling and Fixed Ways

Returning to the Midbar. The Pesikta gives a striking description of the

mitzvos of Succos. Hashem tells Klal Yisrael, בְּסוּכּוֹת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים לִמְעַן יֵדַע - *For seven days you shall dwell in sukkos, so that your generations will know that I caused Bnei Yisrael to dwell in sukkos*, and then adds, *You are not conferring anything upon Me; you are merely repaying what you owe* (Pesikta DeRav Kahana in addendum at end; Yalkut Shimoni, Emor 247). Succos asks us to repay a debt of memory, to recover the awareness created when Hashem took us from Egypt and sustained us in the Midbar.

The Midrash continues, *I also told you to take the lulav and wave it before Me*, because *When I took you from Egypt, I caused the mountains to move before you*. Thus, the *passuk* says, *The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like young sheep* (Tehillim 114:4). This is a key to the Yom Tov. The miracles of the Midbar were not merely events to remember; they were meant to create, for all generations, a way of seeing the world.

At the Word of Hashem. For forty years, ordinary human existence should have been impossible. Food, water, protection, direction, and every basic need came from Hashem. The Torah sums up that life in one refrain: *At the word of Hashem they encamped, and at the word of Hashem they traveled* (Bamidbar 9:23). The lesson was not merely that Hashem can perform miracles. It was that every movement of life is under His direction.

Even the open miracles of Yetziyas Mitzrayim were not enough by themselves to engrave this truth into Klal Yisrael. Forty years of journeys were necessary. Emunah had to be learned not only by witnessing wonders, but by living day after day without independent certainty of where they would be tomorrow, and discovering that Hashem provides every need. That is why Succos must be renewed every year. A soldier may complete his initial training, but he periodically returns to reinforce what he learned. So too, we step out of ordinary life and return to the Midbar. The house, livelihood, schedule, and routines on which we rely are useful, but they are not our security. The prophet describes the future geulah with the words *As in the days when you left Egypt, I will show him wonders* (Michah 7:15). The Midbar remains the school in which Klal Yisrael learns how to live with Hashem.

Leaving the Permanent Dwelling. The Gemara defines the sukkah through the phrase *Leave your permanent dwelling and sit in a temporary dwelling* (Sukkah 2a). This is more than a technical description of the mitzvah. A person becomes attached to fixed patterns. His house must look this way, his schedule must remain that way, and his habits and assumptions begin to feel like part of his identity. Succos physically removes him from that fixedness.

This is why Succos follows immediately after the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah and Yom Kippur. Teshuvah cannot be limited to regretting isolated acts while preserving the road that produced them. The Navi says, *Let the wicked abandon his path and the sinful man his thoughts, and let him return to Hashem* (Yeshayahu 55:7). The emphasis is on *his path and his thoughts*.

Sometimes the problem is not one wrong act but a settled *derech*, an entire way of thinking and living.

Rabbeinu Yonah distinguishes between one who stumbled under the pressure of the *yetzer hara* and one who has made sin into a settled way of life. For the latter, the beginning of *teshuvah* is to abandon that path and those thoughts before turning to regret and confession (Shaarei Teshuva 1:11). The Rambam makes the same point: *Do not say that teshuvah applies only to sins of action; a person must also search out his heretical views and repent from them* (Hilchos Teshuvah 7:3). Succos gives this demand a physical form: leave what feels permanent. After Yom Kippur, the question is not only whether we regret what we did, but whether we are willing to move.

This also answers the familiar question of why the sukkah is celebrated in

Tishrei rather than Nissan, when Bnei Yisrael actually left Egypt. Its place immediately after Yom Kippur is itself part of its message. *Leave the permanent dwelling and sit in a temporary dwelling* means that yesterday's *kevius* need not control the person who has just done *teshuvah*. The supposedly permanent world is itself only a corridor: *This world is like a corridor before the World to Come; prepare yourself in the corridor so that you may enter the palace* (Avos 4:16).

The Four Minim: Turning the Enemy into a Weapon. The four minim carry the same message into the days after judgment. The Tikkunei Zohar describes them as instruments of victory: *With these weapons of battle, Bnei Israel are marked as having prevailed in judgment*. It continues, *Look at those marked by the weapons in their hands, and you will know who prevailed in judgment* (Tikkunim 29a). The four minim are therefore not decorative signs of victory. They are *weapons of battle*.

Why these particular weapons? The Midrash connects each species to a central faculty of the person: *The esrog resembles the heart, the lulav the spine, the hadas the eyes, and the aravah the lips* (Vayikra Rabbah 30:14). These are precisely the powers through which a person desires, stands, sees, speaks, and acts. Before *teshuvah*, they can become his enemies. After *teshuvah*, they become the weapons with which he serves Hashem. The self that once pulled him away has been reclaimed.

This returns us to the deeper human condition described by Koheles: *G-d made man upright, but they sought many schemes* (Koheles 7:29). The work of *teshuvah* is to restore the person to that original straightness. When the heart, eyes, body, and speech return to their proper task, the very faculties that had endangered him become his strength.

Protection After Yom Kippur

The Vilá Gaon reads the words of Tehillim as an allusion to the mitzvos and avodos of Succos: *He will conceal me in His sukkah on the day of trouble, hide me in His shelter, and raise my head above the enemies around me* (Tehillim 27:5-6). Protection and victory are woven throughout the festival.

Why is so much protection necessary immediately after Yom Kippur? Because a person has become, in a real sense, different, cleaner and spiritually more precious. Precisely then he needs greater guarding. Succos surrounds what Yom Kippur created with mitzvos: sukkah, the four minim, Hallel, simchah, and the other avodos of the festival. Their purpose is not simply to add new experiences, but to preserve what Yom Kippur achieved. This also explains the place of simchah. Joy itself protects. A person guards what he values. When he rejoices in what he has received and senses its worth, he is less likely to surrender it. The joy of Succos is therefore not a retreat from the seriousness of Yom Kippur. It is one of the ways Yom Kippur survives.

Within the Ananei HaKavod. The Midbar was also the place in which Klal Yisrael learned that Hashem Himself was enough. On the words *He found him in a wilderness land* (Haazinu 32:10), Rashi explains that Hashem found Israel faithful because they accepted His Torah, His kingship, and His yoke. The Rashbam explains *here* in the sense of sufficient provision: in the Midbar, Hashem was the source from which every need was supplied. The wilderness stripped away ordinary supports so that Klal Yisrael could discover what it means to depend upon Hashem without illusion.

The Ananei HaKavod therefore did more than protect from heat and danger. They created a distinct spiritual space. Moshe asked Hashem, *I and Your people shall be distinguished from every nation upon the earth* (Shemos 33:16). The clouds were part of that separation. Especially after the *Chet haEgel*, Klal Yisrael required not only

forgiveness, but a protected environment in which renewed closeness to Hashem could survive. The sukkah recreates that enclosure. Its walls are temporary, but what they protect is permanent.

Conclusion: A Yearly Reorientation. Succos therefore does far more than commemorate an ancient miracle. It reenacts the education of the Midbar. We leave the illusion of permanence and return to יסעו פי ה' יחנו ועל פי ה' יסעו - *At the word of Hashem they encamped, and at the word of Hashem they traveled*. What was seen at Yetziyas Mitzrayim had to become lived *emunah* through forty years of dependence. What was achieved on Yom Kippur must likewise become a new way of living. The sukkah loosens our old *kevius*, the four minim place our recovered faculties back into our hands as מאני קרבא - *weapons of battle*, and the joy and protection of the Yom Tov help preserve what *teshuvah* has created.

For seven days we return to the Midbar so that, when we return home, we will see the home differently. Livelihood, routine, and human plans are necessary, but they are not the source of security. The only true permanence is attachment to Hashem. That is the yearly work of Succos: to leave the permanent dwelling long enough to discover what is truly permanent.

Adapted and summarized from

הלכה by Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin (1888–1978)

THE LAWS OF THE ARBA MINIM

The Structure of the Laws

The laws of the *lulav* and its accompanying species fall into three broad groups. Some are general principles of *mitzvos* that the Gemara develops through the Four Species; others are laws shared by all four species; and still others belong to one species alone. The Four Species thus become a meeting place for some of the broadest concepts in halachah and some of its most exacting details.

A Mitzvah That Comes Through an Aveirah. The Mishnah opens with the rule - לולב הגזול והיבש פסול - *a stolen or dried lulav is invalid* (Mishnah Sukkah 3:1; Sukkah 29b). From the stolen *lulav* emerges the general principle of מצוה - *a mitzvah that comes through an aveirah*. On the first day a stolen *lulav* is already excluded by לכם - *it must be yours* (Vayikra 23:40). The Gemara therefore asks why theft still disqualifies it on the later days, when personal ownership is no longer required, and answers משום מצוה הבאה בעבירה - *because the mitzvah comes through an aveirah* (Sukkah 30a). The Gemara compares the stolen object to a lame animal offered on the mizbeach: גזול דומיא דפסח - *the stolen is like the lame*. Just as the lame animal cannot be repaired for the offering, the stolen object remains disqualified. It connects this with אהב משפט שנא גזל בעולה - *I Hashem love justice and hate robbery in an offering* (Yeshayahu 61:8).

The Gemara adds a striking parable. A king passing a customs house tells his attendants to pay the duty even though the customs revenue belongs to him, ממני ילמדו כל עובדי דרכים ולא יבריהו עצמן מן המכס - *let all travelers learn from me not to evade the customs*. So too, Hashem says, ממני ילמדו בני ויבריהו עצמן - *let My children learn from Me to keep themselves from theft* (Sukkah 30a). The point is not merely that theft is forbidden. The mitzvah itself cannot become the vehicle through which the theft is consummated.

Tosafos define the central case as שמחמת העבירה באה המצוה - *the mitzvah comes about because of the aveirah*. The Pnei Yehoshua uses this to explain Shmuel's statement concerning the second day, מתוך שיוצא בשאול יוצא בגזול - *since one fulfills the mitzvah with a borrowed lulav, one can also fulfill it with a stolen one*. Shmuel is certainly not permitting theft. Rather, where ownership is unnecessary, the theft is not what makes performance possible, since the same object could have been used as a loan. Rabbeinu Chananel, however, applies *mitzvah haba'ah ba'aveirah* more broadly, even to an *asheirah* and an *ir hanidachas*. The laws of *lulav* thus raise the larger question whether the aveirah must itself produce the mitzvah, or whether an object associated with aveirah may be intrinsically unfit for mitzvah use.

Bal Tosif. The Four Species also illustrate *bal tosif*, the prohibition against adding to a mitzvah. The Torah says לא תוסיף עליו ולא תגרע ממנו - *do not add to it and do not subtract from it* (Devarim 13:1), and the Sifrei applies the

pasuk directly to *lulav*. The Gemara distinguishes between an addition that changes the prescribed object itself and an extra item that stands separately, *this stands by itself and that stands by itself* - *האי לחודיה קאי והאי לחודיה קאי* (Sanhedrin 88b). The Rambam therefore states simply אין פוחתין מהן ואין מוסיפין עליהן - *one may neither subtract from the four species nor add to them* (Hilchos Lulav 7:5).

One Mitzvah of Four Species. The first shared law is that the four species are indispensable to one another: *the four species of the lulav are indispensable to one another* (Menachos 27a). Chazal derive this from ולקחתם - *and you shall take*, understood as *a complete taking* - *לקיחה תמה*. If one species is missing, the obligation cannot be fulfilled with the remaining three, although the Raavad permits taking those available, without a bracha, as a remembrance of the mitzvah. The Rambam captures the unity of the command: *these four species are one mitzvah, are indispensable to one another, and together are called the mitzvah of lulav* (Hilchos Lulav 7:5-6).

Must they also be taken simultaneously? The Gemara says לא שנו אלא שאין לו - *this was taught only where he does not have all four; if he has them, they do not impede one another* (Menachos 27a). Behag understands that if all four are available they may be taken successively. Rabbeinu Tam requires them to be taken together, although they need not be physically bound. The Rambam and Shulchan Aruch follow Behag. The Chelkas Yoav nevertheless argues that *lechatchilah* the Torah contemplates a simultaneous taking, while *bedieved* successive taking suffices. He points to the Gemara's question *does he not fulfill the mitzvah as soon as he lifts it?* (Sukkah 42a). If simultaneous taking were indispensable even *bedieved*, the Gemara could simply have answered that the *lulav* had been lifted without the *esrog*.

What Counts as Taking. The Torah says ולקחתם - *and you shall take* (Vayikra 23:40). Does this require an affirmative act of taking, or can the continuing state of holding the species itself count as *lekichah*? The question matters if one picked them up before dawn and continued holding them after dawn, or if legal ownership became complete only after they were already in his hand. R. Mordechai Friedburg and R. Elazar Moshe of Pinsk compare the law of receiving the blood of a korban, where the Torah says ולקח הכהן מדם - *the kohen shall take some of the blood of the sin-offering with his finger* (Vayikra 4:25). If a monkey placed the blood into the kohen's hand, the kohen would still have to perform a new act of taking (Zevachim 14a). The word ולקח therefore suggests an act, not merely possession. A related question is whether one must actually raise the Four Species from where they rest or whether grasping them in place is enough. The majority of the Acharonim require an actual lifting; R. Moshe ben Chaviv writes that *lechatchilah* they should be raised three *tefachim* and certainly at least one. The Gemara also asks whether לקיחה על ידי דבר אחר שמה לקיחה - *taking through another object is still called taking*. Rava answers that it can be, provided it is בדרך ביזיון - *in a disrespectful manner*, rather than בדרך כבוד - *in a degrading manner* (Sukkah 42a). The Chasam Sofer explains the underlying distinction: לקיחה על ידי דבר אחר שמה לקיחה אבל נגיעה על ידי דבר אחר לאו שמה נגיעה - *taking through another object is still taking, but touching through another object is not touching*. *Lekichah* is an act accomplished through a person's power and control, so a respectful intermediary need not destroy the act. [CS: The Mishnah Berurah rules that if gloves or a ring intervened, one should take the *minim* again without a berachah (651:33, 36).]

Binding and Holding the Species. The *lulav* with its *hadasim* and *aravos* is held in the right hand and the *esrog* in the left, because the right hand carries three mitzvah-elements while the left carries one. R. Yehudah holds that the three species require an indispensable binding; the Chachamim disagree, and the Gemara concludes *it is a mitzvah to bind the lulav, but if it was not bound it is still valid*. The binding is an expression of *this is my G-d and I will beautify Him* (Sukkah 11b; Shemos 15:2). The accepted practice is three ties, one joining the species and two higher on the *lulav*. [CS: If the *lulav* and *esrog* were taken together in one

hand, the Mishnah Berurah rules that on the first day they should be taken again properly, without another berachah (651:15).]

The Time and Place of the Mitzvah. Outside the Mikdash the Torah obligation is one day, וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בְּיוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן - *you shall take for yourselves on the first day*, while in the Mikdash it applies for seven, וְשִׂמַּחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה' - *you shall rejoice before Hashem your G-d for seven days* (Vayikra 23:40). After the destruction, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai instituted taking the *lulav* everywhere for seven days - *as a remembrance of the Mikdash* (Sukkah 41a). The Rishonim dispute whether Yerushalayim itself has the status of Mikdash for this purpose. Rashi treats it as the rest of the country; the Rambam is understood to include Yerushalayim within Mikdash. R. Yaakov Ettlinger therefore concludes that according to the Rambam the Torah obligation of *lulav* applies all seven days in Yerushalayim even in our time (Bikurei Yaakov 658:1).

The people of Yerushalayim expressed the mitzvah in another way. כך היה - *this was the custom of the people of Yerushalayim: a man left his home with his lulav in hand*. He went to shul with it, recited Shema and davened with it, and carried it as he went about his day, setting it aside only when necessary (Sukkah 41b). The *lulav* was not merely taken once; it accompanied the day as a beloved mitzvah.

In the Way They Grow. The Four Species must be taken - *in the manner of their growth*. Chazal formulate the broader rule - *with these mitzvos one fulfills the obligation only in the way the object grows* (Sukkah 45b). Their bases must therefore be below and their tops above. For the *esrog*, the halachic orientation follows the way it initially grows: the stem end is below and the upper end above. One who reverses it does not fulfill the mitzvah.

The Blessing and the Wavings. The bracha presents a familiar difficulty. כל - *for all mitzvos the bracha is recited immediately before performance*. Yet - *once he has lifted the lulav he has already fulfilled the mitzvah* (Sukkah 42a). The Rishonim therefore discuss taking the *lulav* before the *esrog*, holding one species upside down until after the bracha, or, as the Gra advises, expressly intending not to fulfill the mitzvah until the bracha has been recited. The initial taking is followed by the *na'anui*. The Mishnah says that Beis Hillel waved at - *כי טוב* and הוֹדוּ לַה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא (Sukkah 37b). R. Yochanan explains - *מוליך ומביא למי שהארבע רוחות שלו מעלה ומוריד למי שהשמים והארץ שלו* - *one moves them outward and inward for the One to Whom the four directions belong, and raises and lowers them for the One to Whom heaven and earth belong*. There is also a striking *remez* in - *David and all the House of Israel rejoiced before Hashem with musical instruments and menaaneim* (II Shmuel 6:5). A Midrash cited in this connection explains זה - *this is the lulav that a person waves in his hand* (see Etz HaSadeh 650:1).

Lachem: The Requirement of Ownership. The word לכם - *for yourselves* teaches - *משלכם להוציא את השאול ואת* - *it must be your own*. Thus - *yours means from your own property, excluding a borrowed or stolen lulav* (Sukkah 43a). A jointly owned *esrog* likewise cannot be used on the first day unless each partner receives full ownership of the shares of the others. Where one *esrog* served an entire community, it therefore had to pass from person to person as a genuine gift.

The classic case is the voyage of Rabban Gamliel, R. Yehoshua, R. Elazar ben Azaryah, and R. Akiva, when only Rabban Gamliel possessed a *lulav*. After taking it he gave it to R. Yehoshua, who passed it to R. Elazar ben Azaryah, then to R. Akiva, who returned it to Rabban Gamliel. The Gemara derives from the return that - *a gift given on condition that it be returned is legally a gift*. The recipient is owner for the mitzvah, but the condition requires the object ultimately to return. [CS: For a jointly owned set, the Mishnah Berurah says it is preferable to state expressly that each partner gives his share as a *matanah al menas lehachzir* (658:32).] The requirement of ownership brings the laws of *kinyan* directly into the mitzvah. The Machaneh Ephraim raised a particularly sharp problem: if a

person buys an *esrog* but will pay only after Sukkos, has he acquired it on the Torah level? He reasoned that - *meshichah acquires only rabbinically, while by Torah law money effects the purchase*. If - *requires Torah-level ownership*, a merely rabbinic acquisition might seem insufficient. The Acharonim give several reasons not to treat this as a practical obstacle, and the conclusion is מצד הדין - *strictly speaking, there is no concern*. [CS: The Mishnah Berurah says that *lechatchilah* the *esrog* should be paid for before Yom Tov (658:10).]

Hadar: Beauty as a Requirement. The Torah calls the *esrog* - *the fruit of a hadar tree* (Vayikra 23:40). Chazal interpret the phrase in several ways, including - *אין עץ שטעם עצו ופריו שיה* - *a fruit whose tree and fruit have the same taste*, and - *הדר באילנו משנה לשנה* - *it dwells on its tree from year to year* (Sukkah 35a). But *hadar* is also a halachic quality of beauty and wholeness. It is more than the general obligation of - *beautify the mitzvah*: here beauty enters the Torah's definition of a valid species. Thus dryness, loss of the top, and other defects may invalidate because the object no longer possesses the required *hadar*. The precise rules differ among the four species and, on the later days, some defects are treated more leniently.

The Lulav. The Torah calls the *lulav* - *branches of date palms* (Vayikra 23:40). The Gemara understands - *as a palm branch capable of being brought together: if it has separated, bind it* (Sukkah 32a). A hardened palm branch whose leaves can no longer be joined therefore does not fit the Torah's description. The special laws of the *lulav* concern the integrity of its leaves, spine, and uppermost growth, particularly the *tiyomes*. [CS: The Mishnah Berurah notes that a split in only a minority of the central leaf does not invalidate the *lulav*; the concern is when most of it is split (645:16).]

[CS: Rav Moshe Feinstein ruled that the Canary-palm *lulav* is invalid, writing - *it is clear that this is not one of the species of lulav* (Igros Moshe, O.C. IV:123). Some poskim disagree.] This reflects a broader botanical question: does - *require a branch of the fruit-bearing date palm itself, or is a closely resembling palm species sufficient?*

The Hadas. The *hadas* is - *a branch of a thick-leaved tree* (Vayikra 23:40). The Gemara identifies it as - *a tree whose leaves cover its stem*, and defines - *by the arrangement* - *three leaves stand together at one level* (Sukkah 32b). If two are level and the third begins above them, the branch is not fully *avos* and is called a *hadas shoteh*. The Rema records an older practice of relying on less regular formations, but later Acharonim strongly questioned that leniency. [The Mishnah Berurah prefers a fully *meshulash hadas*; *bedieved*, it is sufficient if the leaves are properly *meshulash* over most of the minimum kosher length of the *hadas* (646:15, 18).]

[CS: It is reported from Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach that the three leaf-stems need not emerge at mathematically identical heights. If a horizontal line around the branch would intersect all three stems, the formation can still be considered *meshulash*.] The halachah requires three *hadasim*. Their minimum length, like that of the *aravos*, is three *tefachim*.

The Aravah. - *willows of the brook* identifies a particular species, not every plant growing beside water. The Gemara gives its signs - *its stem is red, its leaf elongated, and its edge smooth* (Sukkah 34a). The Rambam emphasizes that the species remains valid even when it grows in a desert or on a mountain; the similar *tzafzafah* is invalid. The halachah requires two *aravos*. Their minimum length is three *tefachim*, while the spine of the *lulav* must be four so that it rises a *tefach* above the *hadasim* and *aravos*.

The Esrog and Its Identity. The Ramban explains that - *fruit of the hadar tree* was not a riddle from which Chazal had to discover which fruit the Torah meant. The identity of the *esrog* was received by mesorah; the familiar derashos, such as - *a fruit whose tree and fruit have the same taste*, and - *הדר באילנו משנה לשנה* - *it remains on its tree from year to year*, support that received identification. הן אסמכתות ששערו

לרבותינו לקבלתם - *they are supports that our Sages gave for their received tradition* (Ramban, Vayikra 23:40).

The Rambam makes the same point explicitly. Chazal did not begin by wondering whether the Torah meant a pomegranate, quince, or some other fruit and then identify the *esrog* through deduction. עד ראינו בלא ספק מיהושע עד - *we see without doubt that from Yehoshua until now the esrog was taken with the lulav every year, without dispute*. They then -חקרו על הרמז הנמצא בכתוב לזה הפירוש המקובל - *sought the allusion in the written Torah to the received interpretation* (Rambam, Introduction to the Mishnah). The derashah explains the mesorah; it does not create it.

Special Disqualifications of the Esrog. The *esrog* has a particularly detailed body of law governing missing flesh, cracking, discoloration, loss of the *pitom* or stem, and other defects. The Mishnah also invalidates an *esrog* of *orlah* or impure *terumah*. The Gemara gives two explanations: לפי שאין בה - *because there is no lawful right to eat it*, and לפי שאין בה דין ממון - *because it lacks the monetary ownership required by lachem* (Sukkah 35a). The discussion shows that איש איש אינו מלאך - *is not always satisfied by bare physical possession*; the owner may need a legally usable interest in the fruit. [CS: The small black specks commonly found on contemporary *esrogim* are generally specks of dirt or pesticides rather than the discoloration that invalidates an *esrog* – see sources in Halachipedia "Etrog" FN5.]

Grafted Esrogim. A major question in the later literature is the *esrog hamurkav*, an *esrog* grafted with lemon or another species. Maharam Alshich, the Rema, Levush, and major later poskim invalidate it. R. Shmuel Yehudah Katzenellenbogen records that once in Padua the entire community had only a single kosher *esrog*. Even after students seized it while it was being sent from the Ashkenazic to the Italian community, the community redeemed it at great expense ולא רצה לצאת במורכבים אשר רבו כמו רובו בכל בתי - *and would not rely on the grafted esrogim that were abundant in the gardens of the nobles*.

Several explanations were offered for the invalidity. Grafting itself may involve an *aveirah*; the grafted branch may become halachically subordinate to the host tree; part of the fruit may be viewed as lemon rather than *esrog*; and the defining quality פרי עץ שטעם עץ ופריו שיהיה - *a fruit whose tree and fruit have the same taste* may be lacking. Some authorities went so far as to invalidate even an *esrog* merely suspected of grafting. Others argued at length for validation even of fruit certainly known to be grafted, answering these objections one by one. [CS: The Mishnah Berurah treats an *esrog hamurkav* as invalid even in a pressing circumstance, because it is regarded as not the required species (649:46, 53).] The later bans on Corfu *esrogim* because of anti-Jewish persecution on the island should not be confused with this separate halachic question of grafting.

The Size of the Esrog. R. Meir and R. Yehudah dispute the minimum size of an *esrog*: כגודל - *the size of a nut*, or כביצה - *the size of an egg* (Mishnah Sukkah 3:7). The halachah follows R. Yehudah. The Chasam Sofer makes an unusual point: this is not simply another application of the later numerical dispute over the volume of a *kebeitzah*. תמיד השיעור שנקרא בשם פרי הוא כביצה - *the measure that qualifies as a fruit is always the size of an egg of that time*. The issue is the natural stage at which the *esrog* itself has matured into a fruit. At the upper end, the halachah follows R. Yosi that there is no maximum size.

Conclusion. The Four Species begin with four familiar objects, yet their laws reach into some of the broadest areas of halachah: theft and *mitzvah haba'ah ba'aveirah*, *bal tosif*, the meaning of *lekichah*, ownership and acquisition, *hadar*, botanical identity, and the relationship between mesorah and derashah. The Pri Megadim therefore cautions that rulings concerning the fitness of an *esrog* demand particular care, invoking the warning המורים - *those who issue rulings are many, but those who truly know are few*. The very precision of the details reveals how much halachic structure is contained within the seemingly simple command ולקחתם לכם - *you shall take for yourselves*.

The Jugglers: Roots in the Soil, Eyes on the Stars

How to Breathe Eternity in a Worn-Out World

By Rabbi YY Jacobson

A comedian once shared: I went into a store and bought eight oranges. The clerk asked whether I wanted a bag. I said, No, I juggle. But I only juggle eight. If you ever see me buying nine, bag them up.

Each year on Sukkos, during the days of the Beis HaMikdash, Jerusalem witnessed one of the most extraordinary celebrations in Jewish life, the Simchas Beis Hashoevah. Throughout the year, the daily offerings were accompanied by wine poured on the Altar. On Sukkos, water was poured as well. Each night, the water-drawing was preceded by an all-night celebration in the Temple courtyard, with music, singing, dancing, and enormous lamps illuminating Jerusalem. At daybreak, a procession descended to the Shiloach Spring to draw the water.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chanania recalled that during the days of the water-drawing, our eyes saw no sleep. The Mishnah famously declares that one who never witnessed the Simchas Beis Hashoevah never witnessed true joy. Yet the Mishnah singles out one unusual feature of these celebrations. The chassidim v'anshei maaseh, the pious and men of great deeds, would dance while juggling flaming torches. The Gemara describes Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, the Nasi and leader of the Jewish people, juggling eight burning torches without one touching another.

Why did the Mishnah consider this worth recording? Singing and dancing are obvious expressions of joy. But why juggling, and why should one of the greatest sages and leaders of Israel perform it?

The question becomes even more striking when we discover that juggling appears repeatedly among the sages of the Talmud. Levi juggled eight knives before Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi. Shmuel juggled eight cups of wine before King Shapur. Abaye juggled eight eggs before Rabbah. Rabbi Shmuel bar Yitzchak would dance before a bride while juggling three hadasim. Rabbi Zeira initially criticized him for conduct that seemed beneath his dignity, but after Rabbi Shmuel bar Yitzchak's death, when a pillar of fire separated his bier from the people, Rabbi Zeira recognized the spiritual greatness embodied in that very behavior. Why were some of the greatest sages also jugglers?

The Story of Life. During a Sukkos address in 1957, the Lubavitcher Rebbe offered a beautiful explanation. Juggling, he suggested, gives physical expression to the meaning of life and to the secret of genuine joy. We often say that we have too many balls in the air. Life itself is a juggling act. We juggle work, family, obligations, pressures, worries, and responsibilities. But Judaism asks us to juggle something more: torches of fire.

הנר הוא נשמת אדם - the soul of man is the lamp of Hashem (Mishlei 20:27).

Each of us carries a flame within. The soul contains light, warmth, passion, and the capacity to illuminate the world around it.

At times, the torch must be thrown upward. A person needs moments when the soul can rise above the pressures and burdens of ordinary existence and reconnect with its source. We need time for Torah, tefillah, reflection, and simply being present before Hashem. The world calls this downtime. Judaism might call it uptime: moments when the soul is allowed to soar.

But the torch cannot remain in the air. It must come down. We cannot live permanently above the world; our task is to bring the light of the soul into the world. The spiritual experience must return to family, work, relationships, responsibilities, and the ordinary details of life.

That is the art of juggling: one torch ascends while another descends. One part of the person remains rooted above, while another enters fully into life below. Then the roles reverse. We rise in order to return refreshed, and we return in order to elevate the world around us.

Yaakov Avinu's ladder captured the same idea: מוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה - standing on the earth, with its top reaching heaven. A Jew must be firmly planted in this world while remaining attached to something beyond it. We cannot become swallowed by the anxieties and pressures of ordinary life, but neither may we escape into spirituality and abandon our responsibilities.

Reb Yitzchak of Vorka was once asked what it means to be a Jew. He answered that it means to dance while sitting still, to cry out while remaining silent, and to be alone even among a thousand people. The Jew lives simultaneously in more than one dimension.

The Integrated Soul. This is why juggling belonged at the heart of the Simchas Beis Hashoevah. True joy requires integration. If I remain entirely below, absorbed in the daily grind, I become depleted. If I remain entirely above, detached from human responsibility, I have abandoned my mission. Happiness comes from learning to move between the two without losing either.

The great sages were the master jugglers because this balance demands spiritual discipline. Some people would gladly escape upward and never return. Others become so entangled in the pressures of life that they forget how to rise. The chassid, the spiritually integrated person, knows how to do both: to ascend without escaping, and to descend without becoming trapped. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, the leader of Israel, therefore stood before the nation juggling flames. A true Jewish leader must be completely present among his people without becoming consumed by the pettiness and darkness of the world. He remains connected to Heaven while dealing with earth. He brings light downward without allowing the darkness below to extinguish the flame above.

That is the life of a Jew. Roots in the soil, eyes on the stars. One torch rising, another descending, and through the movement between them, the world itself begins to shine.

Sources: Mishnah and Gemara, Sukkah 51a-53a; Kesuvos 17a. The Lubavitcher Rebbe's explanation appears in Sichos Kodesh 5718 and Toras Menachem 5718, vol. 21. For other explanations of the juggling, see Chasdei David to Tosefta Sukkah ch. 4; Iyun Yaakov and Yefeh Anaf to Ein Yaakov, Sukkah; and Aruch LaNer, Sukkah.
[Slightly condensed for space constraints]

The Truth About Schach Mats

Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question: We arrived at a communally available sukkah and discovered that the schach is a mat made of wooden slats held together with ordinary string. May we use it?

Question: May polyester thread be used to tie down schach? I have heard conflicting opinions.

Question: Did Rav Moshe Feinstein permit venetian blinds for schach? Schach mats have become extremely common, but depending on how they are manufactured, they may raise several halachic questions. To understand them, we must first review the basic requirements of schach. Schach must come from vegetative material that has been detached from the ground, is not food, and is not a kli, an item susceptible to tumah. The detailed laws of kabbalas tumah are complex, but for our purposes the central question is whether processing a natural material can turn it into something halachically considered a utensil and therefore invalid as schach.

The Original Schach Mats. The Mishnah (Sukkah 19b) discusses mats made of reeds. A mat intended for sleeping, sitting, or lying upon is susceptible to tumah and is invalid as schach. The Gemara (20a) concludes that small reed mats are presumed to have been made for sleeping and therefore may not be used as schach unless they were manufactured specifically for roofing. Larger mats, which were less commonly used for sleeping, are presumed acceptable unless it is known that they were made for that purpose.

This issue remains relevant to modern schach mats. Years ago, a distributor asked me to provide a hechsher for large mats made in China from split bamboo tied together with nylon thread. Two separate problems arose. First, bamboo mats in China are commonly used for sitting or sleeping. The rishonim disagree whose intent controls the status of a mat manufactured for sale. Rabbi Yeshayah of Trani holds that the purchaser's intended use determines its status. According to this view, mats specially ordered for schach would be acceptable. The Rosh (Sukkah 1:37), however, rules that in

a place where mats are normally manufactured for sleeping, even a mat specifically ordered for schach is invalid because of a rabbinic concern that ordinary sleeping mats might then be used as schach.

To avoid the issue, I advised the distributor to have the factory weave, at six-inch intervals, pieces of bamboo too thick to permit the mat to be used comfortably for sleeping. The mat would then clearly be manufactured only for roofing purposes.

The second problem involved the nylon thread. Nylon does not grow from the ground and cannot itself serve as schach. The question therefore becomes whether the material holding schach together must itself be valid schach.

Ma'amid Bedavar HaMekabel Tumah. The Mishnah records a dispute concerning schach resting on bedposts. The Tanna Kamma validates the sukkah, while Rabbi Yehudah invalidates it. According to one explanation in the Gemara, Rabbi Yehudah's concern is that the ma'amid, the material supporting and holding the schach in place, is susceptible to tumah.

Rashi explains that supporting schach with material susceptible to tumah resembles using such material as schach itself. Some authorities understand this concern as potentially de'Oraisa, while most understand it as a rabbinic safeguard lest one eventually use invalid material for the schach itself.

Although most major rishonim permit a sukkah whose schach is supported by material that is invalid for schach, later authorities generally follow the Magen Avraham (629:9): the sukkah is kosher, but lechatchilah one should support the schach with material that itself qualifies as schach. Thus, if one visits a sukkah whose schach rests directly on metal, the sukkah may still be used, assuming it is otherwise kosher, even though it ideally should not have been constructed that way.

Rav Shmuel Vosner adds an important point. He understands the concern with ma'amid to extend not only to material susceptible to tumah but to anything that itself is invalid as schach (Shevet HaLevi 6:74).

The Strings Holding a Mat Together. A schach mat necessarily requires some material to hold its pieces together. Several authorities rule that where the mat would fall apart or not remain on the sukkah without those strings, the strings themselves constitute a ma'amid (Shevet HaLevi 6:74; Yechaveh Daas 1:64).

The status of the string depends in part on its material and processing. Wool cannot be used as schach because it does not grow from the ground. Linen thread is susceptible to tumah. Chazal also prohibited partially processed flax as schach (Sukkah 12b).

The rishonim offer several explanations for the prohibition of processed flax. The Rambam explains that after processing it no longer appears to have grown from the ground. The Raavad connects the prohibition to its use for stuffing pillows and consequent susceptibility to tumah. Tosafos explains that because it is close to becoming finished linen thread, Chazal already treated it like thread.

The difference is important. According to the first approaches, similar concerns can apply to processed cotton, hemp, jute, and other fibers.

According to Tosafos's explanation, the specific rabbinic prohibition may be limited to flax. The Mishnah Berurah (629:12) therefore rules stringently that thread of any material should not itself be used as schach.

But a thread used only to hold a mat together is not the schach itself; it is a ma'amid. That leaves room for greater leniency. The Ritva indicates that the concern with ma'amid may apply only where the supporting material is invalid as schach min haTorah. Material prohibited only midrabbanan may therefore be less problematic, although the Pri Megadim expresses greater concern.

This distinction lies behind a disagreement concerning modern schach mats. Rav Ovadia Yosef was asked about mats tied with cotton twine and ruled that they may be used lechatchilah. Although cotton thread may itself be rabbinically invalid as schach, its use merely as a ma'amid is sufficiently removed from the original prohibition.

Rav Vosner was asked about a mat tied with nylon. Because nylon is synthetic and cannot qualify as schach at all, and because the mat would not remain intact without it, he regarded the nylon as an improper ma'amid. He

therefore ruled that such a mat should not be used lechatchilah , although a sukkah roofed with it remains kosher.

This also explains the practical question about polyester thread. If the schach will remain securely in place without being tied, the thread is not supporting it in the same sense. But if the schach would otherwise fall or blow off, polyester or other synthetic thread becomes the ma'amid and should not be used lechatchilah . Cotton or another natural fiber is preferable. Rav Ovadia Yosef considers cotton acceptable lechatchilah ; even those who are more stringent would generally regard it as preferable to synthetic cord. Some certified schach mats avoid these concerns by using coarse bamboo that is clearly unsuitable for sleeping together with coarse natural twine that has not been spun into ordinary thread. Such construction avoids both the question of a sleeping mat and the problem of an invalid ma'amid .

What About Venetian Blinds? Rav Moshe Feinstein is sometimes quoted as permitting wooden venetian blinds for schach. In fact, he ruled the opposite. In Rav Moshe's time, venetian blinds consisted of wooden slats held together by cloth. In Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 1:177, he discusses a question that arose through Rav Shimshon Zelig Fortman concerning wooden boards and venetian blinds. Rav Moshe distinguishes between ordinary boards that may, under certain circumstances, be usable for schach and venetian blinds. The blinds themselves, he rules, are susceptible to tumah and therefore invalid as schach min haTorah. Even removing the wooden slats from the completed blinds does not make them valid. Thus, Rav Moshe discusses venetian blinds, but unquestionably prohibits their use as schach.

Can Improper Use Invalidate a Mat? Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank addressed an unusual case involving mats manufactured specifically for schach. Their owner instructed movers not to use them for any other purpose. The movers nevertheless used them to pack glassware. Since mats used for storage can acquire the status of utensils and become invalid for schach, the owner asked whether the movers had ruined them.

Rav Frank ruled that the mats remained kosher. When an owner expressly limits an object's use, another person's unauthorized use does not override the owner's designation. The mats therefore retained their status as schach.

Conclusion. Schach mats can raise several independent questions: whether the mat was manufactured for sleeping or another utensil-like purpose, whether the material binding it together serves as a ma'amid , and whether that binding material is itself acceptable for supporting schach. These concerns can be avoided by purchasing mats with reliable halachic certification.

The broader lesson is that the laws of schach are more intricate than they initially appear. A sukkah that looks perfectly ordinary may involve questions that are not obvious to the layperson. It is therefore worthwhile to have someone knowledgeable in Hilchos Sukkah inspect a sukkah before Yom Tov, particularly when its construction or schach is unusual.

Wishing everyone a chag kosher v'sameach

[Slightly condensed for space constraints]

Rav Kook on Sukkot and the Land of Israel

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From the introduction to **Eitz Hadar**

In 1907, Rav Kook published Eitz Hadar, a halachic work devoted to etrogim grown in Eretz Yisrael and the problem of grafted etrogim. He also saw the use of Israeli etrogim as a way for Jews throughout the world to strengthen their connection to Eretz Yisrael and support its developing Jewish communities.

Underlying Connections. Our world is an alma d'peruda, a reality divided into seemingly conflicting realms: physical and spiritual, secular and holy, compassion and strict justice. Yet beneath these divisions lies an underlying unity, a shared point that connects what appears separate. This principle, emphasized in the Torah's inner teachings, provides a deeper way of understanding the world.

The Sages teach in Kiddushin 36b that mitzvos fall into two broad categories. Some are mitzvos hateluyos ba'aretz, obligations dependent upon

the Land, such as Shemitah and ma'asros. Others, such as Shabbos, tefillah, and Torah study, apply even outside Eretz Yisrael. What connects these two categories?

The Ramban, in his commentary to Bereishis 26:5 and Devarim 11:18, explains that the ultimate root of all mitzvos is Eretz Yisrael. Even mitzvos observed in exile preserve the spiritual identity of the Jewish people so that, upon returning to their Land, they will continue their ancient way of life rather than begin anew. The Sifrei makes the point explicitly: אף על פי שאני - מגלה אתכם מן הארץ לחוצה לארץ היו מצוינים במצוות שכשתחזור לא יהו עליכם חדשים - Even when I exile you from the Land, remain distinguished through mitzvos, so that when you return they will not be new to you.

Thus, even mitzvos that apply everywhere retain an inner connection to Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Kook compares this to the role of land in material life. A nation may express itself through culture, art, wisdom, and science, but all of these ultimately require a physical foundation in land. Land is like the root of a tree. The roots may seem lowly compared with the beauty of the branches and fruit, but without them nothing can grow. So too in the spiritual realm: the rich world of mitzvos is ultimately rooted in the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael. The Four Species. Is there one mitzvah that visibly unites these two categories? Rav Kook finds it in the arba'ah minim. The mitzvah is a personal obligation incumbent upon a Jew wherever he lives, yet its very objects evoke Eretz Yisrael, its vegetation, harvest, and fruit: ולקחתם לכם ביום - הראשון פרי עץ הדר כפת תמרims וענף עץ עבת וערבי נחל - You shall take for yourselves a beautiful fruit, a palm branch, myrtle branches, and willows of the brook (Vayikra 23:40).

Indeed, Sukkos as a whole is closely connected with Eretz Yisrael and the harvest. The Sages taught that the calendar may be adjusted so that Sukkos occurs during the harvest season (Sifrei 192). The connection is particularly evident in the etrog. Rambam suggests that one reason the Torah selected this fruit was its availability in Eretz Yisrael (Moreh Nevuchim 3:43).

In exile, by contrast, obtaining an etrog was often difficult and expensive. That difficulty itself could deepen the Jew's longing for Eretz Yisrael, a land naturally suited to the fulfillment of the mitzvah. After the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai specifically extended the taking of the arba'ah minim throughout the seven days of Sukkos as a zecheh laMikdash, commemorating their seven-day use in the Mikdash (Rosh Hashanah 30a).

Etrogim and Settling the Land. Rav Kook was deeply concerned with the widespread use of grafted etrogim, which are not valid for the mitzvah. He therefore encouraged the development of reliable etrog orchards in Eretz Yisrael. Purchasing properly supervised Israeli etrogim could accomplish two purposes at once: enabling Jews to fulfill the mitzvah properly while supporting Jewish agriculture and settlement in the Land.

For Rav Kook, this was more than an economic preference. The etrog itself joins together two dimensions of Jewish life. It is a mitzvah incumbent upon every Jew, wherever he lives, yet it naturally turns his attention toward Eretz Yisrael. By choosing the produce of the Land, the mitzvah becomes not only a remembrance of Eretz Yisrael but a concrete way of participating in its rebuilding.

In this way, the arba'ah minim embody Rav Kook's larger vision. What appears divided is ultimately connected. The mitzvos of exile point toward Eretz Yisrael; the spiritual life of the Jewish people is rooted in its Land; and even a single etrog can join personal avodas Hashem with the rebuilding of the Jewish homeland.

Adapted from the introduction to Rav Kook's Eitz Hadar, as presented in Silver from the Land of Israel.

[Slightly condensed for space constraints]