

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn



To view the video with subtitles, visit:
MerkazAnash.com/sukkos5778

WE'RE ALL UNITED—BUT HOW?

The Yom Tov of Sukkos features a number of mitzvos. There is the fact that it is a Yom Tov, just like Pesach and Shavuos, and then there is the added joy of Sukkos associated with *simchas beis ha'shoeiva*. But in addition to this, there are two mitzvos unique to this Yom Tov: we are commanded to take up residence in a sukkah as if it were our home, and to fulfill the mitzvah of the four *minim*.

LULAV IN THE SUKKAH

Although these are two separate mitzvos, the Alter Rebbe cites the Arizal as stating that it is ideal to make the *brachah* on the four *minim* while inside the sukkah.

A story is told that the Rogotchover Gaon, who would ignore practices which he thought lacked a halachic basis, was once visited by a *chossid* who wished to make the *brachah* on his set of four *minim*. The Rogotchover is reported to have said: "You're a *chossid* [who follows the Alter Rebbe's words], so go make the *brachah* in the sukkah!" When the *chossid* asked, "What about you?" the Rogotchover is said to have replied, "I myself make the *brachah* in my house."

However, the Rebbe once called the story's veracity into question, since there is in fact halachic basis for making the *brachah* in a sukkah. We are supposed to live in a sukkah as we would in our own home. Any activity significant enough to us to do at home and not in the street should be done in the sukkah. Making a *brachah* on the four *minim* is certainly an important activity; we wouldn't do it on the fly in the street, rather at home or in *shul*. It is only logical that it is preferable to do it in our current home, the sukkah!

If there are indeed halachic grounds for this custom, why does the Alter Rebbe appear to attribute it to the Arizal? The reason is because according to the above explanation,

shaking the lulav in the sukkah is done to properly fulfill the *mitzvah of sukkah*, through conducting one's activities there. By stating that *shaking the lulav* is better done in the sukkah, the Alter Rebbe is saying that one also fulfills the *mitzvah of lulav* in a more superior manner when it is done in the sukkah.

(In fact, according to the Rebbe, this latter point also has support in earlier sources, so the story with the Rogotchover is difficult to believe.)

DIFFERENT UNITIES

Why indeed is it better to shake the lulav in the sukkah, although it is seemingly a separate, unrelated mitzvah?

Both mitzvos of sukkah and the four *minim* share a common denominator—the theme of *achdus*, unity. Regarding sukkah Chazal state, "All Jews are able to sit inside one sukkah." Similarly, the four species, famously representing Jews of various kinds,

all come together as one. Chassidus adds that this is even reflected in the individual *minim*: The *hadass* must grow in three-leaf clusters; the lulav leaves must be fused together as one; *aravos* grow in bunches. In particular, the esrog remains on the tree throughout the four seasons of the year (unlike most other fruits), uniting them all.

But although both mitzvos express the concept of *achdus*, there is a fundamental distinction between the two.

It is known that the Jewish nation is compared to a single body. This can be viewed in two ways. One is a transcendental perspective from which limbs lose their own identities and are simply defined as part of the person. Another approach is to view ourselves as distinct limbs of one body, where every part has something to offer: the head directs the feet, and the feet bring the head to its destination.

You may love someone because you recognize that your souls are all united with Hashem. The problem is that you don't love your friend as he exists in reality.

Likewise, there's a plane on which all Jews are equal. No matter their level of scholarship or observance, the *pintele Yid* is the same by everyone. Additionally, there is a level where, despite being aware of our unique identities, we still assist and support each other.

THE SHOFAR-SUKKAH CONNECTION

These two types of unity are characterized by the sukkah and four *minim*.

Seforim observe that the numerical value of "*schach*" (60+20+20) is 100, identical to the number of *shofar* blasts (60 *tekios* + 20 *shevarim* + 20 *teruos*). This demonstrates that there is a parallel between these two mitzvos.

There's a well-known parable of the Baal Shem Tov about a prince who wished to implore his father to rescue him from his disgraceful state, but to his dismay was unable to do so, as he'd forgotten the royal language. Instead, he called out, "Oy!" and was thus identified by his voice.

The *nimshal* is that it happens that a Jew can find himself alienated from the "language" of Torah and mitzvos, *rachamana litzlan*. When found in such a state, he can ultimately signal his distress through the sound of the *shofar*, because deep down we all share the same core.

The same idea applies to the sukkah. The sukkah is modeled after the clouds of glory which surrounded the Jewish people in the desert, protecting them as one. "All Jews are able to sit in one sukkah": a sukkah is an equalizer, a place where we're all equally present.

The *achdus* of the four *minim*, however, is different. We weren't commanded to take four *esrogim* or four *aravos*. We select four distinct species, each with its unique identity, yet they come

together as one bundle. This is reminiscent of the second type of *achdus*, where we join together despite our differences.

PRACTICAL LOVE

It would appear that the model of sukkah is loftier, since it transcends individual definitions and distinctions, as opposed to the four *minim* which, despite bringing opposites together, never manages to erase the differences.

However, the truth is that you need the unity of the four *minim* as well. You may love someone because you recognize that you're only divided by your bodies, but your souls are all united with Hashem. You don't love your friend as he exists in reality, rather you connect with him on a deeper plane, the plane of his *neshamah*.

But seeing people for their souls is not sufficient. You need to support your fellow in a realistic, tangible way, and not only spiritually but physically as well. (For example, if you and your colleague are both in business, not only should you not undercut his profession, but you should assist him in his endeavors.)

On the other hand, the unity of the four *minim* is also not enough. Alone, it can be

viewed as a state where you simply help others but aren't actually united with them. Our point of departure must be the sukkah, where we recognize that we're all one entity, and then we must reconcile and integrate that view with the everyday reality we live with.

That is the underlying idea behind making the *brachah* on the four *minim* in the sukkah: The paradigm of sukkah, where we are all one, enhances the perspective of the four *minim*, resulting in true and complete love for each other.

For further learning see 181 ל"ח ע' 181

The paradigm of sukkah enhances the perspective of the four *minim*, resulting in true and complete love for each other.

merkazanash.com
info@merkazanash.com
347.471.1770

Sponsored by
Rabbi and Mrs. Yitzchok Wolf

Help make The Chassidus Perspective available on a weekly basis.
Sponsor a week or join our monthly support team.