

# The CHASSIDUS PERSPECTIVE with Reb Yoel Kahn

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## UNITY IN PRACTICE TOO

*Succos* features a number of *mitzvos*. Specifically, aside from the more common aspect of it being a *yom tov* as well as the *simcha* associated with *simchas beis ha'shoeiva*, we are commanded to take up residence in a *succa* as if it were our home, and to fulfill the *mitzva* of the four *minim*.

### LULAV IN THE SUCCA

The *Alter Rebbe* cites the writings of the *Arizal* in his *siddur* stating that it is ideal to make the *bracha* for the four *minim* while inside the *succa*. A story is told that the *Rogotchover gaon*, who would ignore practices which he thought lacked a halachic basis, was once visited by a *chasid* who wished to make the *bracha* on his set of four *minim*. The *Rogotchover* is reported to have said: "You're a *chasid*, so go make the *bracha* in the *succa*." When the *chasid* asked "What about you?" the *Rogotchover* is said to have replied "I myself make the *bracha* in my house."

However, the *Rebbe* once called the story's veracity into question, since there is in fact halachic basis for making the *bracha* in a *succa*: We are supposed to live in a *succa* as we would in our own home, which is defined as doing any indoor activity there, so it follows that something as important the *bracha* on the four *minim* wouldn't be done in the street and should therefore be done in our current home, the *succa*!

And although the *Alter Rebbe* appears to attribute this custom to the *Arizal*, he's really saying that aside from the aspect of

properly fulfilling the *mitzva* of *succa* through conducting one's activities there, one also fulfills the *mitzva* of the four *minim* itself in a more superior manner in this fashion. 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

Both *mitzvos* share the theme of *achdus*: "All Jews can sit inside one *succa*," and 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 clusters of three leaves in one row, the *lulav* leaves must be bent together as one, and the *esrog* in particular grows consistently through every season, uniting them all.

But although both *mitzvos* express the concept of *achdus*, there is a fundamental distinction between the two. A *succa* is an equalizer, where everyone becomes part of one great entity. It's possible to view ourselves as distinct limbs of one body, where every part has something to offer, and then there is a more transcendental perspective from which limbs lose their own identities and are simply defined as part of the person.

Likewise, there's a plane on which all Jews are equal, no matter their level of scholarship or observance, as well as a level where, despite being aware of our unique identities, we still assist and support each other. A *succa* is a place where we're all equally present, undistinguishably encompassed by within.

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## IS TRANSCENDENT BETTER?

*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*). There's a well-known parable of the *Baal Shem Tov* about a prince who wished to implore his father to rescue him from an ignominious fate, but because he'd forgotten the royal language, could only plainly scream and was thus identified by his voice.

The *nimshal* is that although it happens that a Jew can find himself alienated from *Torah* and *mitzvos*, he can ultimately signal his distress through the sound of the *shofar*, because deep down we all share the same core. The same applies to the *succa*, which is modeled after the clouds of glory which surrounded and protected the entire Jewish people in the desert.

The four *minim*, however, aren't four *esrogim* or four *aravos*. Each maintains its unique identity, yet they come together as one bundle. It would appear that the model of *succa* 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.

## NOT JUST IN THEORY

But the truth is that one can learn *Tanya* which explains that we're only divided by our bodies but our souls are all united with *Hashem*, and proceed to love everyone as disembodied souls, disconnected from who they actually are.

But that's not enough; one needs to support his fellow both spiritually and physically. Seeing people for their souls, or even assisting them but only spiritually, is not sufficient. If both own a store, they must not only not undercut each other but

they must be of mutual assistance. On the other hand, simply helping people without properly feeling united with them isn't adequate either.

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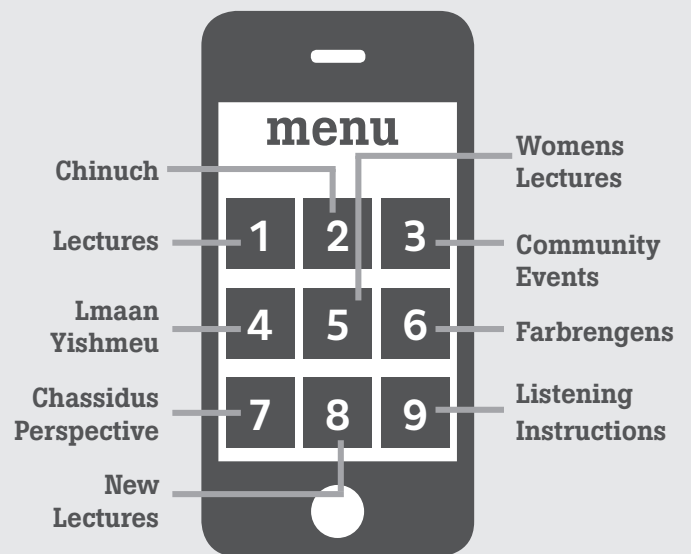
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This is why our point of departure must be the *succa*, where we recognize that we're all one entity, and then we must reconcile and integrate that view with the everyday reality we live with. That is the underlying idea behind making the *bracha* on the four *minim* in the *succa*: The paradigm of *succa*, where we are all one, must be drawn into the perspective of the four *minim*, resulting in true and complete love for each other.

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