

Kinder Torah

Succos

Fix All Four

“*W*hat a beautiful set of *arba minim* (four species) you have, Chaim!”

“*Baruch Hashem*. They may be more beautiful than you think, Avi. Please let me point out a few things about them. Do you see the leaves of this *hadass*? They are shaped like the eyes. The *aravah* leaves resemble the lips. The *lulav* stands up straight like the spine of an upright person. And the beautiful, pure *esrog* is shaped like a heart.”

“Fascinating. I was only complimenting their physical attractiveness, but you pointed out a much deeper beauty.”

“*Rabbeinu Bechaye*, citing a *Medrash*, has a profound insight on the spiritual value of these *arba minim*.”

“Please share it with me, Chaim.”

“*T*he eyes and the heart of a person are the main agents for all mitzvos and sins. As the verse states, ‘Do not explore after your heart and after your eyes’ (*Bamidbar* 15:39). The eye sees, and the heart desires. As for the lips, and the words that they form, they can be used to do many, many mitzvos or (Heaven forbid) sins. What about the spine? It is the foundation of the body. It gives strength by transmitting the commands of the brain. Most of the body’s actions depend on these four organs, which are represented by the *arba minim*. A person’s sins also usually involve the eyes, heart, lips, or spine.”

“If so, then how can he shake the *arba minim*? They represent so many sins.”

“That is precisely the point, Avi. *Rabbeinu Bechaye* explains that the way to receive atonement for the sins committed with these four limbs is to perform mitzvos with the *arba minim* which represent the four limbs.”

“How comforting. What you are saying is that Succos is like Yom Kippur.”

“In a manner of speaking.”

“Thank you for giving me a whole new insight into this beautiful mitzvah.”

Kinderlach . . .

Rabbeinu Bechaye shows us how the lulav connects Succos to Yom Kippur. When you shake the arba minim, think about your eyes, heart, lips, and spine. You are doing a mitzvah with plants that represent those parts of the body. This can help correct any sins done with them. Kinderlach, this is yet another reason to be happy on Succos.

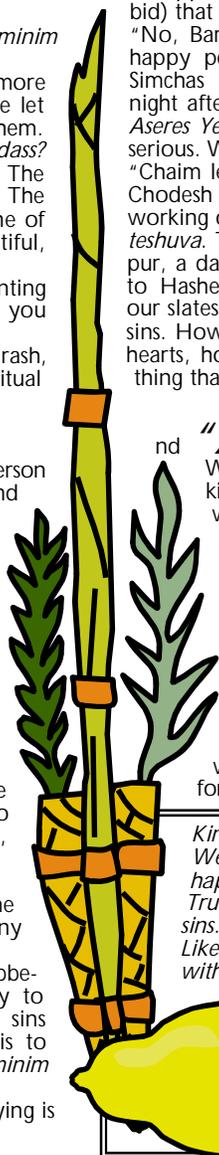
Free of Sin

“*A*vi, what is going on?”
“What do you mean, Chaim?”
“Why is everyone so happy?”

“Why shouldn’t they be? Did something sad happen, *chas v’shalom* (Heaven forbid) that I have not yet heard about?”

“No, *Baruch Hashem*. However, I see happy people singing and dancing at Simchas Beis HaShoeva; celebrating night after night. Just last week, during *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* everyone was so serious. What happened?”

“Chaim let me explain. Ever since *Rosh Chodesh Elul*, we had been intensely working on correcting our sins by doing *teshuva*. The culmination was *Yom Kippur*, a day of tearful fasting and prayer to *Hashem*. We begged Him to wipe our slates clean and forgive us of all our sins. How we cried, how we struck our hearts, how we regretted every wrong thing that we had ever done.



“*A*then . . . the shofar blast. We were forgiven. *Hashem* is so kind. He cleansed our souls and we began anew. What a great feeling! Who is truly happy? One who is free of sin. The most intense happiness in the times of the *Beis HaMikdash* occurred during the holiday of Succos, in the *Simchas Beis HaShoeva* celebrations. The Sages used to dance and sing: “Fortunate is the one who does not sin. And one who sins, let him return and be forgiven” (*Succah* 53a).

Kinderlach . . .

We have yet another reason to be happy on Succos. We are free. Truly free. Free of what? Free of sins. We are cleansed and purified. Like a beautiful white garment, with not a spot of dirt on it. The soul rejoices when it is cleansed of all of the “spiritual dirt” of sin. Therefore, we rejoice in dancing and song on the holiday of Succos.

Your Whole Heart

“*I*f I am here, everything is here. If I am not here, then who is here?” Who would say something like this? It sounds like someone who is very caught up in himself. This statement was actually made by the *Hillel*, in the *Gemora* (*Sukkah* 53a). *Hillel*? Can it be? He was one of the most humble of our sages. He could not be angered by anyone, not even an insolent person who disturbed his *Erev Shabbos* bath three times. This statement seems very out of character for *Hillel*. It must have a deeper meaning.

*R*av *Shmuel Rozofsky* *zi”l* (as quoted in *Lekach Tov*) explained that the “*I*” that

Hillel is referring to is the heart of a person. The person is guided by his heart. If his heart motivates him to do something, then he will put all of his efforts into it. Therefore if “*I*” (my heart) is here, then everything (all of my energies) are here, focused on what I am doing. *Hillel* said this while he was rejoicing at the *Simchas Beis HaShoeva*, the nightly celebrations at the *Beis HaMikdash* during the holiday of Succos. He put his whole heart into making himself and those around him happy. That was the mitzvah of the day.

Kinderlach . . .

We learn two important lessons from Hillel. One is the importance of being happy and making others happy on Succos. Secondly, we learn to put our whole heart into what we are doing. When we do that, we know that we have done our best. We have given everything. We can do no better than that. We have many mitzvos on Succos – living in the Sukkah, lulav, and rejoicing. On Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah, we sing and dance with the Torah for hours on end. Let us put our whole heart into these mitzvos, and all of our mitzvos. May we all merit to have a Chag Sameach, and to dance in the courtyard of the Beis HaMikdash this year.

Questions:

- When do we put up the succah? (Shulcan Auruch Orach Chaim 625:1 - Rema and Mishna Brura)
- What is the maximum height of a succah? (633:1) Minimum height? (633:8) Minimum area? (634:1) Maximum area (634:1)
- What activities must we do in the succah? (639:1)

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