



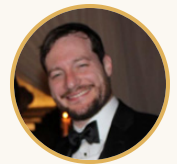
SUKKOS

סוכות



Gematria on the Parshah: The Light of the Aravah

BY REB MOSHE HERSKOVITS



The Lubavitcher Rebbe says that Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret are the holidays when we receive the blessings that were sealed for us on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Chassidut explains that waving the Arba Minim is a conduit that draws these blessings to all of Israel. What is the reason we need to wave the Arba Minim to draw all blessings to Am Yisrael? And why is the brachah on the Arba Minim, Al Netilat Lulav?

It is well known that the Arba Minim represent four types of Jews. The לולב (Lulav) is gematria 68, the same as חכם (wise person), representing the Torah scholar. The Etrog represents the Jew who possesses both Torah and mitzvot. The Hadas represents the Jew with abundant mitzvot, while the Aravah represents the Jew who appears to have neither Torah wisdom nor abundant mitzvot.

The Lulav and Etrog represent the spiritually accomplished Jew, while the Aravah appears to represent the opposite. Yet there is a remarkable gematria: לולב + אתרוג (Lulav+Etrog), 678, is equal to ערבות (Aravot). Why do they share the same gematria?

Perhaps the lesson is that the Lulav and Etrog are interconnected with the Aravah. The holiest Jews must seek to better the lives of those who are furthest away and shine their light upon them. This may also explain why the brachah is said specifically on the Lulav. The Lulav represents the Torah scholar, and it is the responsibility of the person who has received spiritual light to bring that light to others. The Zohar says that one who brings another person closer to Hashem has all the blessings in his hands. Only when the Lulav shines his light to the three other types of Jews can a brachah be recited.

Similarly, Rabbi Natan of Breslov explains the same idea with lighting Chanukah candles, when we increase the light each day. The holier someone becomes, the more obligated he becomes to

bring that light to others. But there is an even deeper lesson. The Lulav and Etrog Jews must realize that the Aravah is not simply someone who needs their light. The Aravah also possesses a unique light of his own.

The Arba Minim each represent one letter of Shem Hashem, with the Aravah representing the final Hei. Without the Aravah, the Name is incomplete, and the mission of the Jewish people is incomplete. Every Jew has a unique role in Hashem's plan.

What is unique about the light of the Aravah? The Aravah shares the same root as ערב (evening). On the surface, the Aravah may possess qualities that appear dark: ego, anger, stubbornness or arrogance. But these same qualities can be channeled toward Avodat Hashem. Anger can become passion for what is right. Stubbornness can become determination. Arrogance can become the courage to stand up against evil.

The responsibility of the Lulav and Etrog is therefore not simply to change the Aravah. It is to find the good within the Aravah and help him discover how his unique strengths can be used for Hashem.

STORY: FINDING THE LIGHT IN OTHERS

Rav Tzadok was a wagon driver who was deeply involved in Torah and Tehillim. His son, however, went very far from Judaism. Before Rav Tzadok passed away, he asked in his will that his son say Kaddish for him. His son agreed because, despite everything, he knew that his father had always been good to him.

He went to three different shuls to say Kaddish, but each one rejected him. They told him that he would contaminate the shul. Eventually, he came to Breslov. He would say Kaddish and leave without praying.

One day, Rav Yankel Kafuman of Zhitomir approached him and said, "Forgive me for asking, but you are already here. Why not put on tefillin as well?" He did not condemn him or push him away. He simply saw a Jew who was still connected to his father and offered him another mitzvah.

That conversation changed his life, and he eventually became frum.

Years later, the government closed all the mikvaot. Rav Levi Yitzchak Bender approached this same man and said, "I know you are a gifted builder. We need you to build a secret mikvah that no one will ever discover."

He built it. The government eventually heard that there was a hidden mikvah and sent a horse and wagon over the area to search for it. They never discovered it.

The man whom others had once feared would mitameh the shul had become the man who mitaher the entire community.

MESSAGE FOR US

This is the secret of the Aravah. Sometimes we look at another Jew and see only what he is missing. But Hashem sees the light that is hidden inside him.

The greatest gift the Lulav and Etrog can give the Aravah is not simply to give him their light. It is to help him recognize that his light is necessary too.

לולב + אתרוג (Lulav+Etrog) is 678 = ערבות (Aravot).

The Aravah is not outside the picture. He is an essential part of it.

For more, check out the Gematria Torah channel on YouTube!

Ripened by the Changing Winds!

BY RABBI AVROHOM JACKS



The Torah calls the esrog the pri etz hadar, the splendid fruit. Our Sages read hadar as ha'dar, the one that dwells.

This is because the esrog is unique amongst all fruits in that it remains (dwells) on its tree all year long. Most fruits ripen in one season, before they are picked or drop from the tree. But the esrog hangs on. It lives through the brutal summer heat, and it braves every cold winter rain.

Each of the four species has either taste or smell, or neither. Only the esrog blends flavor and fragrance harmoniously. One would expect that kind of harmony to be found in a fruit grown in a temperature-controlled greenhouse, where it experiences perfect conditions at all times. However, as it turns out, G-d's recipe for the most balanced fruit on earth is weather. Lots of it, with lots of variety.

You have probably noticed this in your own life. Think about the people you admire most, the ones whose presence makes a whole room smell sweeter. Almost none of them had an easy ride. They got blown around. They adjusted again and again, and somewhere in all that adjusting they became whole. Because after all, heat builds sweetness. Rain builds juice. Change helps us grow.

So let's talk about the season you're in right now. Is your business shifting? Is there a changing family situation? Do things feel

unstable?

Your job in these changing seasons is to hold on to the branch and stay connected to the Source. Keep learning a little and keep doing a little. The fluctuations you experience help you evolve and develop.

Heat builds sweetness. Rain builds juice. Change helps us grow.

The esrog may have zero say over the weather, but it gets to decide what it holds onto tightly. So, this Sukkos, when you lift it up and bring it close, take a real breath of that fragrance. That scent came from a full year of changing winds.

Chag Sameach!

What If You Didn't Have to Hold Everything Together?

BY REB ADAM KLASNER



There is something strange about Sukkos.

We spend the entire year trying to build security. We work to make more money, strengthen our relationships, protect our children, improve our health, build our homes, and create some sense that everything is going to be okay.

And then Sukkos comes along and Hashem tells us to leave the house.

Leave the solid walls. Leave the roof over your head. Go outside and sit in a temporary structure where the wind can come through and you can literally see the sky through the schach.

And then the Torah calls Sukkos "zman simchaseinu," the time of our joy.

Why would leaving the security of our home be associated with the greatest joy?

Maybe because there are two kinds of safety.

There is the safety we spend our lives trying to create, and there is the safety that comes when we realize we were never completely in control to begin with.

We desperately want to know that everything is going to work out. That the business will succeed. That our children will be okay. That our marriage will stay strong. That our health will remain good. That the plans we have for our lives will actually happen.

So we build walls.

Not only physical ones. Emotional ones too.

We control. We plan. We prepare. We overthink. We try to predict what everyone around us is going to do. Sometimes we even try to control the people we love because their choices make us feel unsafe.

And underneath so much of it is fear.

If I don't hold everything together, what happens?

Sukkos gives us a completely different experience of safety.

For seven days, Hashem essentially says: Come outside.

Sit with Me.

The walls don't need to be as strong as you think.
 The roof doesn't need to be sealed.
 You don't need to know exactly what happens next.
 You can sit underneath something fragile and still be held.
 That doesn't mean we stop taking responsibility for our lives.
 Bitachon isn't passivity. We still work. We still protect our families.
 We still have difficult conversations. We still make plans and take action.
 But we stop confusing responsibility with control.
 I can be responsible for how I show up in my marriage without controlling my wife.
 I can guide my children without controlling who they become.
 I can build a business without knowing exactly what Hashem has planned for it.
 I can take care of my body without having a guarantee about tomorrow.
 And maybe I can finally admit that I don't actually know what's going to happen next and still be okay.
 There is tremendous freedom in that.

But we stop confusing responsibility with control.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur ask us to do deep work. We examine ourselves. We take responsibility. We make changes. We ask forgiveness. We reconnect with Hashem.

And then Sukkos comes almost immediately afterward and teaches us something else.

Now stop gripping so tightly.

You did your work.

Now sit in the sukkah.

There is a reason the sukkah surrounds the entire person. You don't only understand Sukkos intellectually. You physically enter it. Your whole body sits inside the mitzvah.

Maybe because there are certain truths that can't just be understood. They need to be experienced.

One of those truths is:

I am held even when I don't feel in control.

Maybe that's what real safety feels like.

Not knowing that nothing difficult will happen.

Not having every question answered.

Not having everyone behave the way you need them to.

But knowing that whatever happens, you are not outside of Hashem's embrace.

The sukkah is temporary.

It's vulnerable.

It's exposed.

And somehow, sitting inside of it, we are commanded to rejoice.

Maybe that's because real joy begins when we stop demanding certainty from life.

We spent Rosh Hashanah crowning Hashem as King.

On Sukkos, we get to experience what that actually means.

If Hashem is King, I don't have to be.

I can breathe.

I can loosen my grip.

I can look through the schach at the sky and remember that my life was never resting entirely on my shoulders.

Maybe the deepest invitation of Sukkos is not simply to leave our homes.

It's to leave the illusion that our walls were what was keeping us safe in the first place.

And for seven days, we practice something most of us spend an entire lifetime trying to learn:

I can be uncertain and still be safe. I can be vulnerable and still be held. I can let go without falling.

The Light That Holds Me

BY REB YACOV ABOUDI



There is a question we rarely ask after Yom Kippur:
 What happens to all that closeness?

For weeks we worked toward Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. We crowned Hashem as King. We looked honestly at ourselves. We confessed, asked forgiveness, and have reconnected coming home.

Then Yom Kippur ends. Four days later Hashem tells us:

בסוכת תשבו שבועת זמנים

"For seven days you shall dwell in sukkot."

Why?

Kabbalah gives us a language that may help us understand. There is an inner light, אור פנימי, and a surrounding light, אור מקיף.

The inner light, אור פנימי, is light I can receive, understand and make part of me. But sometimes the light is greater than what I can receive.

That is אור מקיף, surrounding light.

I cannot yet contain the light, so instead of the light entering me, I enter the light.

Think about a tallit.

I don't simply hold it. I wrap myself inside it. I can close my eyes and feel the holiness warming me from the outside in.

Sometimes holiness begins inside me. But sometimes I am not there yet. So Hashem gives me something to wrap myself in. What I cannot yet bring inside can still surround me.

A light so great that I cannot hold it.

So instead, Hashem holds me.

We find the same image under the chuppah. A husband and wife begin their life together beneath something that surrounds them both.

And then comes Sukkot.

A tallit surrounds my body. A chuppah surrounds husband and wife. But a sukkah surrounds my life.

I eat there. I learn there. I sit with my family there. Ordinary life itself enters the mitzvah.

*A light so great that I cannot hold it. So instead,
 Hashem holds me.*

The Zohar calls the sukkah דְּמֵהֵימְנוּתָא – "the shade of faith."

The Zera Shimshon takes that image further. He writes that the inner purpose of the sukkah is וְיִגֵּן עָלֵינוּ – "that the holy shade should surround us, guard us and protect us."

Maybe that is what emunah asks of me. Not to pretend I understand everything, but to allow myself to live beneath that shade. To recognize that even when I cannot contain what Hashem is doing, I can still allow Him to surround me.

Sukkot lasts seven days, and each day brings another of the seven Ushpizin to the forefront, corresponding to the seven mid-dot: Avraham, Chesed (חסד); Yitzchak, Gevurah (גבורה); Yaakov, Tiferet (תפארת); Moshe, Netzach (נצח); Aharon, Hod (הוד); Yosef, Yesod (יסוד); and David, Malchut (מלכות).

Seven days. Seven Ushpizin. Seven middot.

Day after day, another dimension comes beneath the surrounding light, until the whole person has entered the sukkah.

Maybe that is exactly what we need after Yom Kippur.

On Yom Kippur, for one day the noise becomes quiet. I know what matters. I stand at Neilah and cry:

ה' הוא האלקים

"Hashem is G-d."

Then Yom Kippur ends.

The phone comes back on. Work comes back. The frustrations come back.

I come back.

And I wonder: What happened to Yom Kippur?

Maybe Sukkot is Hashem's answer.

Nothing happened to it.

I touched something greater than myself. I just can't contain all of it yet.

So Hashem gives me seven days to live inside it.

Hashem doesn't just want the person I was during Neilah.

He wants all of me.

Chazal give us one final image.

The Gemara in Bava Batra describes the future:

עֲתִיד הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לַעֲשׂוֹת סִכָּה לַצְדִּיקִים מֵעוֹר שֶׁל לֵוִיָּתָן

"In the future, Hashem will make a sukkah for the righteous from the skin of the Leviathan."

And the Gemara says of that skin:

וְזֵיוו מִבְּהֵיק מִסּוֹף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוֹפוֹ

"Its light will shine from one end of the world to the other."

A skin that radiates light becomes a sukkah.

Even in Chazal's description of the future, there is still something greater than us beneath which we sit.

Maybe that is the point.

There will always be more of Hashem than I can understand. There will always be things in my life that make sense to me, and things that absolutely do not.

That isn't a failure in the relationship.

That is the relationship.

Sukkot teaches me that I don't need to understand everything before I can come close.

I don't need to contain the light.

The light can contain me.

On Rosh Hashanah I asked:

Whose crown am I wearing?

On Yom Kippur:

Hashem has opened the door. Why am I still standing outside?

And now Sukkot comes.

The door is behind me. I am already inside.

So perhaps the question now is:

If Hashem is already holding me as I am, what is it that makes me afraid to let go?

I don't have to hold the light.

Sometimes I simply have to close my eyes and let the light hold me.

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REFLECTIVE QUESTION

If Hashem is already holding me as I am, what is it that makes me afraid to let go?