

Fascinating INSIGHTS

יד' תשרי תשפ"א

סוכות

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[A Heartfelt Hug](#)

There was a rabbi who would visit prisons that had Jewish inmates in order to cheer them up and encourage them. The rabbi's love spilled over that he would even inspire the non-Jewish prisoners, giving them hugs just as he did to the Jewish inmates. However, in one of the prisons he visited, there was a certain inmate that was exceptionally scary-looking— muscular, very tall, covered in tattoos—whom he avoided due to fear. As he was leaving this prison, he heard someone call out from behind him, “rabbi, no hug for me.” It was this scary-looking inmate. The rabbi then gave him a hug. Then the inmate told the rabbi he needs another hug, to which the rabbi conceded.¹ The inmate then began to cry saying those were the first hugs he had ever received in his life.²

In one of the Nazi death camps that were liberated by an American soldier's platoon, there were many starving children. The American soldiers set up a huge pot of soup to feed these children, and the children lined up, eager to receive their share of food. One particular soldier made eye contact with a boy at the end of the line. Since the American soldier couldn't speak the boy's native language, he communicated by offering the boy a hug. After they finished hugging, the soldier looked up and noticed that the children who were previously lined up for soup had postponed their chance to eat and instead formed a line behind the soldier to receive their hugs as well.

The four walls of the Succa and the Schach covering overhead is compared to a child that is totally

embraced in a full body-surrounding hug. It is a Divine hug to us, His children (as we are called בנים אתם לה' you are children to Hashem³).

Of course four complete walls are preferable, but the Succa can be made with a minimum of two complete walls and a section of a third wall. Even a child who is older appreciates a “smaller hug”—an affectionate arm around the shoulder. That is like the minimum Succa—a Succa of two walls and a bit. The Arizal points out three sections—the arm itself from the shoulder to the elbow, the forearm from the elbow to the wrist and from the wrist to the edge of the fingers. This parallels the Succa where the first wall represents a Divine embrace from the “shoulder” to the “elbow”; the second wall reflects the embrace of the “forearm” and the third small wall symbolizes the palm embrace. This is what is referred to in וימינו תחבקני, His right arm embraces me.⁴

The Succa is Hashem's hug to each of us. We must be conscious of His Hug when we enter the Succa and feel His divine, eternal, and unconditional love for us.

[Sharing an Esrog](#)

In the 1700s there was a community that had only one Esrog⁵ during Succos although they had many Lulavim. In a community that was 40 hours travel away there were no Esrogim at all. During Succos this community sent a messenger to the community with the Esrog pleading with them for the Esrog as they relied on them each year for the four species. They reasoned that since the other community already fulfilled the Biblical Mitzva, which is on the first day, and even days after that, they should now receive the Esrog so that the Mitzva shouldn't be completely missed. This brought about a disagreement in the city as some said to send it whereas others said don't. Since they were in doubt they didn't send it. R' Dovid Pardo⁶ (1719-1792) was asked what should have been done?

He replied that the Esrog should've been sent so that they shouldn't be lacking the Mitzva completely.⁷ He

³ Devarim 14:22.

⁴ Shir Hashirim 2:6. See Pri Eitz Chaim, Shaar Chag HaSuccos, chapter 4 and Likutei Torah, Derushim L'Succos, pp. 78-79, 82d, 84a-b, 87a.

⁵ The Chassam Sofer (in his Chidushim to Mesachta Succa 36a) writes that the many times an Esrog is used which causes spots (נימורים)...makes it דרר (beautiful) since it came about through a Mitzva that is its splendor and beauty.

⁶ שו"ת מכתם לדוד, Orach Chaim, 6. He authored numerous works including Maskil LDovid—a commentary on Rashi to Chumash. He was elected chief rabbi of Spalato, Dalmatia upon the death of the previous rabbi. In 1752, he began to publish his first work, Shoshannim LDovid, a commentary on the Mishnah. In 1764, he accepted the position of chief rabbi at Sarajevo, Bosnia. He employed his leisure time in writing and publishing various works. Toward the end of his life he went to Yerushalayim, where he died. He had one daughter and three sons—named Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov.

⁷ The Chassam Sofer was asked the following: There was a person who had an extra Esrog and hung it in his Succa as a decoration. Then on Yom Tov someone from a village came where he couldn't find an Esrog to buy. Is it Muktzah or can this Esrog be given to this person so that he

¹ About 100 years ago, a Rav in Eretz Yisrael that was questioned why he loved Jews that were far removed from an observant Torah lifestyle answered, “Better that I err on the side of baseless love than to err on the side of baseless hatred.”

² Obviously, if he had some hugs in his life prior to this, he would have been a different person.

explained that the Mitzva of the four species after the first day is Rabbinical whereas Gemilus Chassadim is a stringent Biblical Mitzva.⁸

Great Salvation!

The Zohar tells us that Hoshana Rabba is סיומא מבי מלכא, the end of the judgement of the world and the decisions of judgements come forth⁹ from the house of the king.¹⁰ Through Tefila we can save ourselves. Indeed, it is for this reason that we have many Tefilos in the Hoshana Rabba davening. To even the lowest of Jews who may feel they have no hope does this apply and as it says דלותי ולי יהושיע, even those who are low can have a salvation.¹¹ Where do we find an indication of this? תפלה לעני כי יעטר¹²—even a Jew who feels like he is an עני, impoverished in spirituality, can be saved if he wraps himself in Tefila.

This is shown to us in Hoshana Rabba as it is the day of the Arava.¹³ The Midrash¹⁴ tells us that the Arava signifies a Jew that has no Torah or Maasim Tovim. So, even he can daven on this day,¹⁵ as this is what the Arava refers to, the lips.¹⁶ Through using the power of his mouth with Tefila, he can be saved.¹⁷ In fact, Hoshana Rabba is the Ushpizin of Dovid Hamelech, the one who expresses ואני תפלה.¹⁸ With this, explains the Sefas Emes,¹⁹ we can grasp why it is called הושענה רבה since even the lowest of Jews can be saved on this day (as הושענה רבה means great salvation)!

The Day To Truly Celebrate

Why do we have two holidays for the Torah—Shavuot and Simchas Torah?

There is יום שמחת, the wedding day and יום חתונה, the day of happiness.²⁰ The wedding day is not the happiest day as one on the day of his marriage may be in

and his family can fulfill the Mitzva of the four species? The Chassam Sofer ruled that it is permitted to take this Esrog. Although on Yom Tov it is Muktzah, on Chol Hamoed it is permitted as it is only forbidden on Chol Hamoed for benefit since it was designated for a Mitzva (שו"ת חתם סופר, Orach Chaim 184).

⁸ See Baba Kamma 100a. Also Peah 1:1. אוצר פלאות התורה, Vayikra, pp. 1,085-6. Parenthetically, the Chazon Ish wouldn't search for ד' מינים מהוררים for Succos rather just that which was Kosher. The reason? Because of ביטול תורה (R' Nissim Karelitz in Chut Shani, Shabbos, 1, p. 56).

⁹ We start reciting the Hoshanos on Hoshana Rabba with אמיתך since this is the היום החותם, the day the judgement is sealed and the seal of Hashem is אמת (Shabbos 55a. See Bnei Yisosschar, Tishrei 12:8).

¹⁰ Zohar Tzav 31a. See Arizal in Shaar Hakavanos, Succos, 8. For this reason we beat the Arava on this day as it is to sweeten up the judgement.

¹¹ Tehillim 116:6.

¹² Tehillim 102:1.

¹³ See Orach Chaim 664:4.

¹⁴ Vayikra Rabba 30:12.

¹⁵ An allusion to this is found in הר יקראו (Devarim 33:19), as הר is an acronym for הושענה רבה, since on this day we should especially call out to Hashem.

¹⁶ Zohar 3, 32a, Sefer HaChinuch, 324.

¹⁷ A hint to this is shown in the Gematria of ערבה (277) as it is identical to that of עזר, help, since even an "ערבה" Jew can be helped.

¹⁸ Tehillim 109:4. ערבה is related to תערובה, mixture, because even a low Jew can change his destiny on this day and attach himself to Hashem. Then we can say about him that he is sweet and pleasant in his ways as this is what ערבה can mean as הוערב נא in ווערעב נא.

¹⁹ Succos, תרמ, s.v.

²⁰ Shir Hashirim 3:11.

doubt if it will be a lasting bond. Many thoughts go through his mind—what will happen if she burns the food, has a temper and so on. After the first disagreement, they reconcile. Then they know it may be a lasting bond.

יום שמחת is the day the Torah was given. עגל is after we sinned with the Mishkan. That is יום שמחת לכו—the dedication day of the Mishkan²¹ as it atones for the עגל.²²

With this we can explain why we have Simchas Torah if we have Shavuos²³ as by Shavuos we didn't know what we were getting ourselves into just as a Chosson and Kallah with their wedding. Once we saw what it is, we truly can celebrate without apprehension.²⁴ That is Simchas Torah.²⁵

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²¹ Shir Hashirim 3:11, Rashi.

²² Shir Hashirim 1:13, Rashi s.v. צרור.

²³ One can't ask the question why is there Shavuos if we have Simchas Torah because on Shavuos there was an occurrence that took place.

²⁴ The story is told of a leader that allowed any one of his subjects to marry his daughter on condition that the potential suitor wouldn't meet or see his daughter before the marriage. Soon the local inns were buzzing with rumors such as, "I heard she is a deaf-mute" and "I know for a fact that she is foolish." Finally, a simple wholehearted Jew said that he is willing to marry her. After all, she is the daughter of our leader who is so great. As it turned out, he was the only one who volunteered. After the lavish wedding, the groom escorted his bride to their new home where she removed her veil. He was astounded at her beauty. After speaking with her and testing her character, he was very impressed as she excelled beyond his greatest hopes. Overjoyed, he held a lavish party to celebrate his good fortune. In this analogy, the leader is Hashem. When He offered the Torah to each nation, they refused as each one claiming some fault in the Torah they would be unable to live with. When it was offered to the Jews, they said נעשה ונשמע, we will do and then we will understand (Shemos 24:7). They accepted the Torah without having seen it. Although the Jewish people accepted the Torah, they feared a loss as they assumed that the numerous obligations in the Torah would deprive them of pleasures and freedom. Similarly, the groom in the analogy married the leader's daughter fearing he would be disappointed in other areas. But as the Jews learned the Torah and applied it's teaching to their lives, not only did they not have to give up anything, they found the Torah maximized their pleasure in every way. This also explains why Shavuos and Simchas Torah are celebrated so differently as on Shavuos, we stay up all night learning Torah whereas on Simchas Torah we dance. On Shavuos, we show our readiness and anticipation to receive the Torah. Since it is an intellectual appreciation, we stay up all night learning Torah. On Simchas Torah, however, we dance expressing our emotional joy. We are showing that even our bodies have gained tremendously by keeping the Torah. Ask one who has increased their Torah observance and they will say they feared some aspect of the Torah would be restrictive whether keeping Shabbos, Kosher, and the like. However, they kept the Torah knowing it was the most meaningful thing to do. As they grew in their Judaism, they found their lives enhanced in every way.

²⁵ On Simchas Torah, we dance for the Torah we will learn because now we realize what the Torah we received really is. This is alluded to in the word הקפה (We dance in הקפות, circuits on Simchas Torah.) as it also means credit (Shavuos 45a), meaning we are dancing on the Torah we will learn.