

# Likkutei Sichos

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Our Shared Sukkah

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#### BORROWING

The Gemara says in tractate Sukkah:1

It was taught in a Berasia, Rabbi Eliezer says: One cannot fulfil his obligation {of taking the *four species*}<sup>2</sup> on the first day {of Sukkos} by using his fellow's *lulav*, as it says,<sup>3</sup> "You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of the hadar tree, date palm fronds" -{"yourselves" implies that it must be} your own. Similarly, one cannot fulfill the mitzvah of sukkah using his fellow's sukkah, as it says,4 "You shall make for yourself, a festival of Sukkos for seven days" -{"yourself" implies that it must be} your own. The Sages {disagree and} say that even though we say {with regards to *lulav*} that one does not fulfill the *mitzvah* on the first day {of Sukkos} using his fellow's *lulav*, one can fulfill the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* using his fellow's sukkah, as it says,<sup>5</sup> "Every resident among the Israelites shall dwell in sukkos." This verse teaches us that all of Israel are worthy of dwelling in one sukkah. {Thich would imply that it doesn't have to be your own. As such,} according to the Sages, what does "For yourself" come to teach? "For yourself" is needed to exclude the use of a stolen sukkah. A borrowed sukkah, however, is permitted because it says "every resident."

The final ruling follows the opinion of the Sages: Although one cannot fulfil the *mitzvah* of taking the *four species* on the first day of Sukkos if they are borrowed "because it must be yours," one can still fulfill the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* with a borrowed *sukkah*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> *Sukkah* 27b.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> {*Lulav, esrog, hadas, and aravah.*}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Vayikra 23:40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Devarim 16:13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Vayikra 23:42.

The simple understanding of this {distinction drawn in halachah between a set of four species that is borrowed and a borrowed *sukkah*} is as follows: The Sages rule that one's obligation can be fulfilled with a borrowed *sukkah* because the verse "every resident among the Israelites" (which teaches us that all Jews may use one *sukkah*) teaches us that when the other verse says, "Make for *yourself* {a *sukkah*}," it does not mean that a *sukkah* must belong to you. Rather, "yourself" just "excludes {fulfilling the *mitzvah* with} a stolen *sukkah*."

## However, the Alter Rebbe says in Shulchan Aruch:<sup>6</sup>

The *Torah* says that "You shall make for yourself a festival of Sukkos." This implies that a *sukkah* must be your own and not your fellow's; nevertheless, one can still fulfill one's obligation with a borrowed *sukkah* because **it is considered his**, since he enters it with permission. (And it only says "for *yourself*" in order to exclude using a stolen *sukkah*).

We see clearly that also regarding *sukkah*, the word "yourself" teaches us that it must be "yours," yet one may use a borrowed *sukkah* because it is still "considered as if it is **his**."

We need to clarify: Since the reason why one can use a borrowed *sukkah* is (**not** because the verse "every resident..." **includes** a "borrowed one," but rather) because a "borrowed one... is considered as if it is his," why isn't a borrowed *lulav* permitted for the same reason: "a borrowed one... is considered as if it is his"?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch, "Orach Chaim," sec. 637, par. 3.

#### OWNERSHIP

Seemingly, we could answer that there are different degrees of "ownership" (how much something is considered to be "his"). Regarding *sukkah*, the verse "every resident..." teaches that a lower degree of {ownership —} "yours" suffices (which also includes a borrowed *sukkah*, although it does not really belong to him). On the other hand, since there is no verse teaching us the same regarding *lulav*, the clause "you shall take for yourselves" means that it must **actually** be your own. We require that it be completely "yours." This precludes the use of a borrowed *lulav*.

However, the *Alter Rebbe's* wording in a later paragraph implies that a borrowed *sukkah* is considered "**actually his**." To quote:<sup>7</sup>

If one had used a stolen *sukkah* which is standing on the ground {he has fulfilled his obligation}...; nevertheless, initially he should not sit in a *sukkah* situated on his fellow's property. This is because it is not considered actually his, and the Torah says, "you shall make for yourself" — owned by you. And this {stolen *sukkah*} is not comparable to an actual act of borrowing {a *sukkah*}, given with the owner's consent, and hence is considered to be as **actually belonging to the borrower**.

We see, therefore, that a person fulfills his obligation with a borrowed *sukkah* not because a *sukkah* doesn't have to be really "his," but because if it is borrowed, it **actually is his**. So, our original difficulty returns: Why is "borrowing" the *four species* excluded by {the exposition of the phrase} "for yourselves"?

We can posit that the novel teaching derived from the verse "every citizen..." is [not that a *sukkah* that is not completely "yours" is also valid, but **on the contrary**, is] that a *sukkah* has an attribute which causes it

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Ibid., par. 11.

when borrowed to be considered the borrower's — **"really his**." To explain how this works in simple terms: A *sukkah* is lent with the intent that it be **exactly the same** as the **permanent home** in which the borrower lives all year — which is the essential definition of a *sukkah* on the festival {i.e., that it serves as a substitute, permanent home} (unlike the *lulav* for which {the requirement for it to be} "yours" is only a condition). {Therefore,} when he borrows a *sukkah*, it is really his, for "this is the intention {of the owner} in lending it to him."

## **3**.

## UNITY

We can add to the above explanation and make it more palatable by delving deeper.<sup>8</sup> From the verse "every citizen...," we learn that "all of Israel are worthy of dwelling in one *sukkah*." It is the elevated state of the *sukkah* that causes all Jews to unite and become one entity, to the extent that "all of Israel are worthy of dwelling in one *sukkah*." It is for this reason that a borrowed *sukkah* is also "considered actually his."

*Chassidus*<sup>9</sup> explains the verse, "on the appointed time {בכסה} for the day of our festival,"<sup>10</sup> to mean that whatever is achieved on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur remains hidden, "בכסה", "<sup>11</sup> but on the festival of Sukkos, all becomes revealed. Accordingly, we can also understand the difference (regarding the requirement imposed by the phrase "for yourselves") between *sukkah* and *lulav* {whether one may use a borrowed one} by first explaining the concepts of *sukkah* and *lulav* as they exist in a "concealed state"<sup>12</sup> on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> {In the original, "be'pnimius ha'inyanim."}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Siddur Im Dach, p. 235b, et al.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> *Tehillim* 81:4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> {The word בכסה in the verse literally means "on the appointed time," but it is also etymologically related to the word for "hidden."}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> {Literally, "when they are בכסה."}

We have already spoken at length how there are three aspects to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, one higher than the next: a) the *mitzvos* of the day: *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah; and fasting, repentance and confession on Yom Kippur; b) these days as they are part of the Ten Days of **Repentance**: *teshuvah* transcends *mitzvos* (and it can repair, therefore, what may be lacking in one's performance of *mitzvos*); c) the essential character of the **day**, which is even loftier than *teshuvah*: The essential character of Rosh Hashanah is *Hashem's* request for us to "make Me King over you,"<sup>13</sup> the request and the *avodah* of crowning *Hashem* as King. The crux of Yom Kippur is that the **essence** of the day of Yom Kippur itself brings atonement. **This** level of atonement is higher than the atonement brought about by *teshuvah*.

These three aspects express the different levels on which the Jews are connected to and united with Hashem:

On one level, the Jews are, so to speak, a separate entity from G-dliness, but they attach themselves to G-dliness. On this level, the connection and unity must be **achieved** and expressed through **something**, i.e., through the fulfillment of *mitzvos*. Jews accept upon themselves the Heavenly yoke and fulfil the decrees of the King.

Within this level itself, there is yet a deeper level<sup>14</sup> – the more internal connection between the Jews and Hashem which is not dependent on fulfilling *mitzvos*. This is expressed by the dynamic of *teshuvah*. Even if a Jew has, G-d forbid, thrown off the yoke of Heaven and has transgressed Hashem's commandment, the person feels deep remorse and wants to make things right. So he does *teshuvah*.

However, although this type of connection is loftier and deeper than the connection established by fulfilling *mitzvos*, it is still related to *mitzvos*: The regret accompanying *teshuvah* arises from a person not having fulfilled the *mitzvos* of *Hashem*; therefore, the person resolves from here on out to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> *Rosh Hashanah* 16a, 34b.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> {This second level is a deeper dimension within the first level, as explained in the following paragraph.}

fulfil the decrees of the King. Since this relationship is also expressed in a person's resolution to obey Hashem, this shows us that the person is still an autonomous entity who {now} obeys and binds himself to Hashem.

The most sublime form of attachment is {encapsulated in the maxim} "Israel and the Holy One are **all one**;"<sup>15</sup> Jews are essentially one, so to speak, with Hashem. **This** connection underlies Hashem's request, and the *avodah*<sup>16</sup> of "make Me King over you." The Jews arouse and induce Hashem to become King over them.

The connection between Jews with Hashem established by fulfilling Torah *and mitzvos*, or even by *teshuvah*, comes about specifically after we accept Hashem as King. For only once we accept Hashem as King is obedience to the King germane, as is doing *teshuvah* for having disobeyed Him, etc. — all of which connects us with the King.

However, before Hashem becomes a King, so to speak (before the fulfillment of "make Me King over you") what impels the Jewish people to feel that they are missing Hashem's kingship, and motivates them to **beseech** Hashem to become King over them? {The answer is:} The Jews are essentially one with G-dliness and therefore they cannot exist, G-d forbid, without their King.<sup>17</sup>

**4**.

## NO DISTINCTIONS

Now we can also understand why there are differences among Jews in how they fulfill *mitzvos*. Similarly (although on a smaller scale) there are differences in regards to *teshuvah*. Regarding the directive to "make Me King over you," however, there are no distinctions among Jews. (This can

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> {See *Zohar*, vol. 3, 73a.}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> {Divine service.}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> This is {also} why **Hashem** requests us to "say worlds of kingship... so I will be King over you," because the Jews and Hashem are all one.

be seen at the coronation of a human king. At the coronation, when the people subjugate themselves to the king, the highest ranking minister exhibits the same *bitul*<sup>18</sup> to the king as a commoner. Following the coronation ceremony, however, when the king starts to issue decrees, different people in the kingdom fulfill these decrees in different ways.)

The fulfillment of *mitzvos* connects Jews with Hashem in a way that reflects each person's particular feeling of independence from Him. Therefore, the fulfillment of *mitzvos* and a person's submission to Him will vary according to each person's level, i.e., the degree to which an individual perceives himself to be a separate entity.

The *avodah* of *teshuvah* derives from a deeper connection, which is not brought about through the actual fulfillment of *mitzvos*. In this regard, there is no difference between one Jew and another. (We see this from the fact that one can reconnect to Hashem {in an instant} even with one **thought** of *teshuvah*,<sup>19</sup> in one moment.)<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, even at this level, there still exist differences {between Jews}, because ultimately *teshuvah* is due to (and relative to) {a person's} sins; or {on a deeper level} *teshuvah* returns a person to his root and source, which differs from person to person.

{The connection implicit in the directive} "Make Me King over you" stems from the fact that Jews are essentially one with *Hashem*. And just as it is impossible to differentiate between Jews and *Hashem*, {at this level} it is impossible to differentiate between Jews as to how they connect and unite with *Hashem*. In this context, all Jews are as one essence in which there is no division.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> {*Bittul* connotes self-nullification, humility, and the negation of ego.}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> See *Kiddushin* 49b.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> *Zohar*, vol. 1, end of p. 129a.

#### TO EACH ITS OWN

Even though, specifically, all three levels of connection {crowning Hashem, *teshuvah*, and *mitzvos*} are are found in both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, however, generally speaking, and in a revealed way, each level is linked with one of the festivals in the month of Tishrei: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos.

Rosh Hashanah, which as its name **clearly** states, is the "head" of the year. It marks the time when the king is **crowned**. As Rav Saadiah Gaon writes,<sup>21</sup> the "first idea" of "(**the** *mitzvah* of the day) *shofar*"<sup>22</sup> is that "we crown the Creator as our King."

Yom Kippur is **clearly** the day of *teshuvah*, the day on which there is "an end, (and) forgiveness and atonement"<sup>23</sup> for transgressing the commands of the King. Furthermore, even {the advantage that Yom Kippur possesses, its unique quality of} "the essence of the day,"<sup>24</sup> which expresses the essential bond between Jews and Hashem that is even loftier than the connection expressed through *teshuvah*, is, nevertheless, an expression of "**atonement**."<sup>25</sup> {As the name of this day indicates} — it is the Day of **Atonement**.

The festival of Sukkos is the time when Jews are clearly involved in the {actual} fulfillment of *mitzvos* — {dwelling in the} *sukkah*, taking the *four species*, etc. (Starting right after Yom Kippur,) we are {already} "busy with *mitzvos*" {building the Sukkah, etc.} as indicated by the name of this holiday {which expresses the essence of this holiday} — the festival of {fulfilling the *mitzvah* of} Sukkos.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> {Quoted in *Abudraham*, "*Taamei HaTekiyos*."}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> {Rosh Hashanah 26b.}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> The prayers of *Neilah*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Mishneh Torah, "Hilchos Teshuvah," ch 1, par. 3-4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> {This is {also} why **Hashem** requests us to "say words of kingship... so I will be King over you," because the Jews and Hashem are all one.}

#### **REVEALING THE CONNECTION**

Since everything that is achieved (on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) is "בכסה" {concealed}, becomes revealed "for the day of our festival," i.e., on the festival of Sukkos, it is understood that although the primary *avodah*<sup>26</sup> of Sukkos is involvement in *mitzvos*, nevertheless, all of the three above-described levels of relationship — including the levels that are primarily connected to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur — are openly expressed in the *mitzvos* of Sukkos.

Rosh Hashanah (and Yom Kippur)<sup>27</sup> possesses their own unique essential-character, as well as possessing the common nature of *teshuvah* {shared with all Ten Days}, as hinted to in the adage of our Sages:<sup>28</sup> "The ten days **between** Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." This<sup>29</sup> implies that Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are a part of the Ten Days of Repentance, while at the same time, they are (on their own) loftier than the *teshuvah* of these **ten** days. Additionally, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur include a third aspect — the "*mitzvah* of the day."

We find a similar idea in verses pertaining to Sukkos. In describing the holiday, the verse says,<sup>30</sup> "On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the festival of Sukkos, a seven-day period to Hashem"; "You shall make for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> {In the succinct Hebrew original, "inyan."}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> {In the previous paragraph, the Rebbe explained that although, on a particular level, Sukkos represents the third level discussed above (i.e., through the fulfillment of *mitzvos*), nevertheless, since Sukkos also reveals the aspects of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, therefore, the two essential aspects belonging to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are also evident in the *mitzvos* of Sukkah. In this paragraph, the Rebbe illustrates that the same idea really holds true with Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as well: each contains (the above mentioned) three dimensions or levels. - ed.}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Rosh Hashanah 18a.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> {The above-mentioned adage appears paradoxical: On the one hand, we are saying that there are ten days; on the other hand, we say "the ten days *between* Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur," while there are only seven days between them. This supports the teaching that there are two dimensions to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Their *unique* essential aspects transcend the special quality inherent in the days of Ten days of Repentance (as alluded to by the word "between"). On the other hand, they also contain the special quality of the remainder of the Ten Days of Repentance; therefore, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are included in the "ten days." -ed.}

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Vayikra 23:34.

yourself the festival of Sukkos for seven days";<sup>31</sup> and also regarding the mitzvah of sitting in a *sukkah*, the verse says,<sup>32</sup> "You shall dwell in *sukkos* for seven days." (This latter verse does not mean that these seven days have any significance of their own {aside from being days in which we are to dwell in the *sukkah*}.) From these verses, it is clear that the main thrust of Sukkos is the *mitzvah* of **sukkah**.

The law regarding taking of the *four species* states:<sup>33</sup> "You shall take for yourselves **on the first day**, the fruit of the *hadar* tree...." **On the first day** of the holiday of Sukkos, we should fulfill the *mitzvah* of taking the *four species*. From here it is clear that the *mitzvah* of taking the *four species* is not the essential characteristic of the first day of the festival of **Sukkos**.<sup>34</sup>

Following the *mitzvah* of taking the *four species*, the verse continues with the *mitzvah* to rejoice on the festival of Sukkos: "You shall rejoice before Hashem your L-rd for seven days."

In light of the above discussion (in section 5), it is clear that the essential unity of Jews with Hashem as being "all one" (which is expressed in {the directive to} "make Me King over you" on Rosh Hashanah) is revealed in the essential-character of {the festival of Sukkos, which is} the *sukkah*. The connection {between Jews and Hashem} through *teshuvah* (which is the essential point of Yom Kippur) is revealed in the *mitzvah* of *lulav;* and the connection between Jews and Hashem through fulfilling mitzvos **is revealed** in the *mitzvah* of being joyful on Sukkos.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Devarim 16:13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Vayikra 23:42.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Vayikra 23:40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> {By the verse referring to that day as the first day (of Sukkos), it highlights that its primary theme and significance is that it is part of the holiday of Sukkos (i.e., the day when we fulfill the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*). The *mitzvah* of taking the *four species* is an additional, secondary aspect. -ed.}

## JOY

To explain:

We have already explained that regarding the directive to "make Me King over you," all Jews are the same. This reality is revealed on Sukkos by the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* because "all of Israel are worthy of dwelling in one *sukkah*." All Jews, without distinction, are worthy of dwelling and living together in one and the same *sukkah*.

Regarding the *lulav*, on the verse, "you shall take for yourselves on the first day," the *Midrash* says:<sup>35</sup> "To whom is the verse referring? Hashem judges the Jews and the gentiles on Yom Kippur... we don't know who will emerge victorious.... Hashem says, 'Take your *lulavim* in your hand so **everyone will know** that you were vindicated in judgement." This teaches us that the atonement of Yom Kippur is evident and revealed on Sukkos through the *mitzvah* of taking the *four species*.

The *mitzvah* of rejoicing during the festival, which is the joy engendered by performing a *mitzvah*, **reveals** the connection between Jews and Hashem achieved through fulfilling *mitzvos*. This evokes joy in Jews as they rejoice with the *mitzvos* of Hashem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> *Tanchuma, Parshas Emor*, sec. 18. {"And you shall take for yourselves." ... About whom does Scripture speak? About Israel and the nations of the world, when the Holy One judges them on the Day of Atonement. The former and the latter come [for a verdict], but we do not know who has prevailed. To what is the matter comparable? To two people who came before the king for a verdict. Now no one except the king himself knew what [the issue] was between them. The king judged them, but the people did not know who had prevailed against his companion. [However], the King said, "You should know that whoever leaves wielding a lance in his hand has prevailed." So, too, Israel and the nations of the world come to be judged on the Day of Atonement, and who is victorious is not known. The Holy One said, "Take your *lulavim* in your hand, so that everyone will know that you have won."}

#### INSEPARABLE

On this basis, we can now understand the halachic difference between a *sukkah* and a *lulav*.

Since a *sukkah* is the "revelation" of {the directive to} "make Me King over you," as Jews are one with Hashem, it is clear that in our acceptance of Hashem as King, there is no difference between one Jew and another. Meaning, "All of Israel are worthy of dwelling in one *sukkah*" — because of the loftiness of the *sukkah*, Jews all stand in an essential unity. This is not like two {separate things} becoming one; rather, it is an expression of the fact that all Jews are from the outset "all one," sharing one essence.

Therefore, the law is that a borrowed *sukkah* is "as his own," and moreover, it "**actually** *is* his." Since the *sukkah* unites all Jews into a single entity, we cannot distinguish one Jew from another and say this *sukkah* is not "his" but belongs {only} to his fellow; rather, the *sukkah* is his just as it is his fellow's.

[The law regarding a stolen *sukkah* is different. Here, by stealing a *sukkah*, the thief **renounces** and rejects the unity of the *sukkah* by **taking it away** from his fellow. By doing so, he disrupts the unity engendered by the *sukkah* between him and the one from whom he stole the *sukkah*. {In this case,} it cannot be called "his."]

#### 9.

#### THREE CONCEPTS OF UNITY

The above only applies to the *sukkah*. Regarding the *four species*, although they also express the unity of Jews, by binding together all four types of Jews (as known),<sup>36</sup> nevertheless, their unity is such that they all remain **separate** types even after being bound:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Vayikra Rabbah, ch. 30, par. 12; see Likkutei Sichos, vol. 4, "Chag HaSukkos."

The *mitzvah* of the *four species* brings the atonement of Yom Kippur to the surface, and when it comes to atonement, there are differences between one Jew and another. (True, the core idea of atonement and *teshuvah* transcends division; nevertheless the actual atonement affects each individual according to his status.) Similarly, the unity of the *four species* is such that each of the *four species* remains distinct.

Therefore, a borrowed set of *four species* cannot be considered "as his own" because {from the perspective of the unity engendered by this *mitzvah*} a person remains a separate entity from his fellow.

Accordingly, it is understood why the verse says regarding the *sukkah*, "**for yourself**" (in the singular), whereas regarding the *four species*, we learn the law that it must be "your own" from the clause "you shall take **for yourselves**" (plural). In a *sukkah*, all Jews resemble a single entity — "like one body"<sup>37</sup> — and a single body is addressed in the singular. Regarding the *four species*, however, where each item retains its individual identity (they are just bound together), they are referred to in the plural — "yourselves."

Nonetheless, they (the *four species*) do have a unifying aspect when we bind them and connect them together. Then the third layer in our connection with Hashem becomes evident during Sukkos through the *mitzvah* to rejoice. This rejoicing expresses the connection of a Jew with Hashem established through *mitzvos* {and their observance}. Therefore, in this respect, there are substantial differences between the types of Jews:<sup>38</sup> "*Chassidim* and *anshei maaseh*<sup>39</sup> would dance," and "all the people, men and women, all came to see and hear."

-Based on a talk delivered on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Sukkos, 5724 (1963)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Arizal's Taamei HaMitzvos, "Kedoshim," quoted and explained in Derech Mitzvosecha, "Mitzvas Ahavas Yisrael."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Mishnah, Sukkah 51a.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> {Lit., "the pious and men of action."}