



Likkutei Sichos

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Distilled Into Details

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1.

WHY DOES IT SAY “FIRST” TWICE?

In the *parshah* discussing the festival of Sukkos,¹ the Torah repeats the phrase “on the first day” twice: “*On the first day* is a holy convocation, you shall not do any laborious work,”² and, “You shall take for yourselves *on the first day* the fruit of the *hadar* tree...”³ The *Gemara*⁴ cites these verses and teaches that as a reward for {observing the mitzvos associated with} these two “firsts” — “desisting from work during the holiday”⁵ (“on the first day is a holy convocation”), and shaking the *lulav* (“You shall take for yourselves on the first day”) — we will merit “the building of the Temple and the name of Moshiach,” which are both referred to as “first” (“The Throne of Glory, exalted from the *first*⁶, is the place of our Sanctuary”;⁷ “The *first* to come to Zion {will announce}, “Behold, they are here!”).⁸

*Maharsha*⁹ explains the connection: The festival of Sukkos is based on the fact “that I caused the children of Israel to dwell in *sukkos* {booths} when I took them from the land of Egypt.”¹⁰ And by dwelling in *sukkos*, we will merit the rebuilding of the Temple, which is described {as a *sukkah*} in the verse, “His *sukkah* was in Shalem.”¹¹ Taking the *four species*¹² is associated with joy, as the Torah says, “You shall take for yourselves... and be joyous...” Therefore, this gives us the merit to experience joy in the future with the coming of Moshiach.

In this vein, he also explains why the *Gemara* uses the expression “the **name** of Moshiach,” as joy at Moshiach’s arrival is alluded to in

¹ *Vayikra*, ch. 23.

² *Ibid.*, v. 35.

³ *Ibid.*, v. 40.

⁴ *Pesachim* 5a.

⁵ Rashi’s commentary, loc. cit.

⁶ {The implied meaning is “beginning”.}

⁷ *Yirmiyahu* 17:12.

⁸ *Yeshayahu* 41:27.

⁹ {*Maharasha*’s commentary on *Pesachim* 5a.}

¹⁰ *Vayikra* 23:43.

¹¹ *Tehillim* 76:3.

¹² {I.e., the *lulav*, *esrog*, *hadassim*, and *aravos*.}

Moshiach's very name — “His name is Menachem,¹³ since he will comfort and gladden us, as it says,¹⁴ ‘Gladden us according to the days You have afflicted us.’”

We must clarify why our Sages emphasize the notion of “**first**”: Since the relationship between Sukkos and the Temple is based on the verse, “His *sukkah* was in Shalem,” which refers to the Temple, then it would be reasonable to conclude that by observing the *mitzvah* of “you shall dwell in *sukkos* (throughout all) seven days,” we will merit the rebuilding of the Temple. {The basis for this formula is:} The *mitzvah* of the *sukkah* itself, not the *mitzvah* of desisting from laborious work, which is a distinct *mitzvah* in addition to *sukkah* (and is only in effect on the first day¹⁵ of the festival).

A similar question applies to “the name of Moshiach:” Why is the name of Moshiach — who will bring us joy — given as the reward for fulfilling the command, “You shall take for yourselves on the first day”? This *mitzvah* is merely associated with joy. Why not link the reward to our fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of rejoicing itself (“You shall rejoice on your festivals”¹⁶)?

2.

THE STATUS OF THE SUKKAH

The explanation:

There is (a unique element and) a superior quality in the *mitzvah* of the *sukkah* over all other *mitzvos* regarding its effect on physical objects (the *schach* and the walls) used in performing this *mitzvah*:

¹³ *Sanhedrin* 98b; Jerusalem Talmud, *Berachos*, ch. 2, *halachah* 4; *Eichah Rabbah*, sec. 1, par. 51; *Zohar*, vol. 3, 173b (top).

¹⁴ *Tehillim* 90:15; See *Midrash Tehillim* and Rashi's commentary, ad loc, loc. cit.

¹⁵ {While the prohibition from engaging in laborious work applies in Israel only on the first day of Sukkos, in the diaspora, it applies on the first two days.}

¹⁶ *Devarim* 16:14.

When we perform a *mitzvah* with a physical object, the *mitzvah* refines the physical object to the extent that even after the *mitzvah* is fulfilled, the physical object retains the status of a “*mitzvah* item.”¹⁷ For example, regarding the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*, as long as the *tzitzis* are attached to the *tallis*, “it is forbidden to use them for any mundane purpose... for doing so debases the *mitzvah*.”¹⁸ According to some opinions,¹⁹ “even after detaching the *tzitzis*, they may not be treated disrespectfully.”

Nevertheless, *tzitzis* (even while attached to a *tallis*) are merely “*mitzvah* items” and not “sacred items.” (If not for the prohibition against debasing the *mitzvah*, their use would be permitted for a mundane purpose.)

In contrast, by fulfilling the *mitzvah* of dwelling in a *sukkah*, the branches of the *schach* acquire sanctity (and by force of Rabbinic law, the same applies to the walls of the *sukkah*) — “Just as Hashem’s holy Name rests upon things that are consecrated..., His holy Name also rests upon the *sukkah*.”²⁰ Due to their **sanctity**, we may not use these items {for mundane purposes} (during the festival).

[Although a *sukkah* is also deemed a “*mitzvah* item” and not a “sacred item,” this is only so after the festival ends, when the *mitzvah* no longer applies. At that point, we are permitted to make use of the *schach* branches. (It is only that “it is proper not to use them for any disrespectful purpose.”)²¹ But during the seven days of the festival, the *schach* branches are deemed sacred.]

The novelty of the sanctity of the *sukkah* regarding its status as a “*mitzvah* item” (as is the case regarding other *mitzvos*) (also) relates to the effect a *mitzvah* has on a physical object: The qualify as “*mitzvah* item,” an entity must be used “for a *mitzvah* **purpose**” (but it does not acquire any

¹⁷ *Megillah* 26b.

¹⁸ *Shulchan Aruch Harav*, “*Orach Chaim*,” 21:1.

¹⁹ *Rema* and *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” 21:1.

²⁰ *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” 638:1.

²¹ *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” 638:19.

inherent sanctity). In contrast, “the sanctity of a *sukkah*” means that the *sukkah* itself (the *schach* and the walls) becomes sacred: “Just as Hashem’s holy name rests upon things that are consecrated..., His holy name also rests upon the *sukkah*.”

3.

REFINED AND SUBLIME

The same concept holds true regarding the *four species*; the correlation between the actual species and the *mitzvah* performed with them is more clearly expressed {and accentuated} than with other *mitzvos* {and the items used in their performance}.

The interplay between a *mitzvah* and the items used for its performance consists not only of the refinement of the physical item by the *mitzvah* being performed with it (or even by designating a physical item for a *mitzvah* purpose), as discussed. The interplay also relates to the very existence of the physical object {itself} (before the *mitzvah* is performed, or even before the object is designated to be used for a *mitzvah* purpose). The fact that a physical item is suitable for a *mitzvah* purpose (e.g., wool, which is suitable to be used for the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*) demonstrates that the item is more refined and rarified than other physical things (even when those other things are not associated with any Torah prohibition) that are unsuitable for *mitzvah* purposes.

In this context, the *four species* are superior to other items that are suitable to be used for a *mitzvah* purpose: the refinement and the sublimity of the *four species* (which makes them suitable for a *mitzvah* purpose) is openly apparent, as will be explained.

4.

GREATER UNITY

Chassidus explains²² that the reason **these** specific four species were selected as the vehicles for the *mitzvah* {that the Torah introduces with the clause}, “You shall take for yourselves...” is that they symbolize the quality of unity: The *lulav*’s leaves are bound together (i.e., all the leaves are united); *hadassim*, myrtles, have three leaves emerging from one node; cohesion is shown by the way that *aravos* grow; and (especially) the *esrog*, “which dwells {*hadar*}²³ on its tree from year to year,”²⁴ uniting {through its growth} all the four seasonal climates of the year.

Since objects in the world are generally are characterized by division and separation, the quality of unity inherent in the *four species* indicates that the *fours species* have a tenuous connection to “worldliness,” which is a result from their *bittul*²⁵ to G-dliness.

Therefore, although *all* material objects suitable to be used for *mitzvos* are refined and ethereal (as mentioned in section 3 above), their material refinement and delicateness does not compare to that of the *four species*. These are suitable for fulfilling the *mitzvah* to “take {the *four species*} for yourselves,” since their innate material refinement exhibits and portrays the principle of unity more than other physical entities.

²² *Sefer HaMaamarim* 5568 p. 447 ff.; *Sidur Im Dach*, p. 264d ff.; *Hemshech “V’kacha,”* ch. 87, ch. 93 ff.

²³ {This is one of the Talmud’s expositions as to why the Torah refers to the *esrog* as “פרי עץ הדר” — “the fruit of the *hadar* tree,” as quoted in sec. 1 above.}

²⁴ {*Sukkah* 31b; it remains on the tree, growing, and does not wither and fall at the end of the season as do most fruits.}

²⁵ {*Bittul* connotes self-nullification, self-transcendence, and the negation of ego.}

5.

SIMILAR YET DIFFERENT

This is one of the areas in which we see a similarity between these *mitzvos* (the *sukkah* and the *four species*), as well as a difference between them:

These *mitzvos* are similar in that the interplay between the physical items (the *schach*, the *sukkah* walls, and the *four species*) and the *mitzvos* performed with them is more readily felt than in other *mitzvos*.

A difference between these *mitzvos* is that the connection between the *schach* of the *sukkah* and the *mitzvah* of dwelling in the *sukkah* is established by performing an action with a physical entity, i.e., **fulfilling** the *mitzvah*. The connection between the *four species* and the *mitzvah* to “take {the *four species*} for yourselves” is established by virtue of the (inherent) qualities of the *four species*, which make them **suitable** for the *mitzvah*.

6.

THERE'S UNITY, AND THEN THERE'S UNITY!

An additional similarity and difference shared by these two *mitzvos*:

A *sukkah* {embodies an existential state that} transcends discreteness. It encompasses the entire being of a person (“his head and most of his body”)²⁶ as one. Moreover, not only is the *sukkah* above making a distinction between an individual Jew’s head, torso, and legs, it also bespeaks a plane whereon no distinctions exist between one Jew and

²⁶ {*Sukkah* 28a. According to one opinion in the *mishnah*, the minimum size for a *sukkah* to be valid is one big enough to fit a person’s head and most of his body. The dispute is whether his table also needs to be in the *sukkah*, but according to both opinions, regarding the person’s body itself, it is sufficient if his head and *most* of his body is in the *sukkah*.}

another — to the extent that “all of Israel are worthy of dwelling in one *sukkah*.”

The four species are also characterized by unity:

- a) The unity exhibited in the particular of each one of the *species* (as discussed in section 4);
- b) The unity of the *four species* together — all four species collectively become **one mitzvah**.

However, even regarding unity, there is a distinction between the *sukkah* and the *four species*: at the outset, the *sukkah* is not made up of separate parts. In contrast, the *four species* comprise various components (the distinctions between the different species, and also the different elements within each species), but these components become united.

7.

DIVINITY BREEDS UNITY

We can posit that these two differences between the *sukkah* and the *four species* — the difference regarding how the physical object used for the *mitzvah* relates to the *mitzvah* (as per section 5), and the difference as to how each portrays the concept of unity — are interrelated:

The physical world is (on its own) a place of divisiveness and separation. When there exists (and we can observe) an element of unity in certain things in the world, it is because the oneness of Divinity radiates within them.

On this basis, we can deduce that the distinction between the unity of *sukkah* (which transcends division) and of the *four species* (which is just a

unification of distinct entities) is commensurate with the distinct Divine energies radiating in each:

The type of unity expressed by the *four species* — distinct entities that unite (yet remain separate even after coming together) — demonstrates that the world (a place of divisiveness) surrenders²⁷ to Divinity (i.e., oneness). Conversely, the unity expressed by a *sukkah*, which transcends the notion of division, expresses and reflects the Divine Oneness that transcends {engagement with} the world.

On this basis, we can understand how the distinction between the unity of *sukkah* and the unity of the *four species* parallels the distinction between them in the interplay of physical items and *mitzvos*:

Since the “message” of the *four species* is that the world is nullified to Divinity, the interplay between the physical *mitzvah*-objects and the *mitzvah* is accentuated in the physical objects as they are part of the world. Meaning, within their **physical** makeup, we can see how using them for a *mitzvah* is apropos.

Conversely, since the *sukkah*’s “message” is drawing down {i.e., revealing} the oneness of Divinity {into the physical world}, it follows that the interplay between physicality and this *mitzvah* is emphasized in a way that accentuates the {G-dliness drawn down through the} **mitzvah**. Meaning, the level of Divinity expressed by the *mitzvah* of *sukkah* transcends (even) the distinctions between spirituality and physicality, which results in sanctity being infused into the physicality of the *schach* and walls of the *sukkah*.

²⁷ {Literally, “nullifies itself.”}

8.

THE DEPTH OF ULTIMATE UNITY

Nevertheless, there is a superior quality to the unity produced and shown by the binding together of the discrete four species over the unity (the transcendence of discreteness) generated by the *sukkah*. For the spiritual source that unifies discrete particulars (i.e., showing that even discrete particulars are united) stems from Hashem's true Oneness, which {in the first place} surpasses the distinctions of unity or discrete particulars.

The unity represented by the *sukkah* stems from a plane where multiplicity represents the opposite of unity, and so the unity engendered by a *sukkah* negates {the perception of physicality as being composed of} discrete parts. However, for Hashem's simple unity, which is reflective of His Essence, multiplicity poses no contradiction to unity. On the contrary, multiplicity derives from {the ultimate expression of} unity.²⁸

[The same is true regarding the union of physicality and *mitzvos* as it exists in the *sukkah* and the *four species*. There is a superior quality to the union of the *four species* over the union {symbolized and fostered by} the *sukkah*: the union of physicality and a *mitzvah* as expressed in a *sukkah* is only brought about through the performance of the *mitzvah*; it is not inherent in the **nature** of the physical object. Therefore, it does not illustrate true unity. In contrast, since it is recognizable that the physical composition of the *four species*, **by its very nature**, is {already} suitable for a *mitzvah* purpose, the *four species* actually depict true unity.]

However, since **outwardly** the unity of discrete particulars seems to merely defer to {Hashem's} Unity (as opposed to the discrete particulars constituting "unity" on their own), which is a lower form {of unity} than the unity that transcends discreteness, the unity of discrete particulars must follow after the unity that transcends discreteness. In this way, the deeper meaning (and origin) of the unity of discrete particulars — i.e., that their

²⁸ See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 9, p. 157, et passim.

union stems from them being (essentially) one, and that this expresses true unity — can be revealed.

When the unity of discrete particulars follows the unity that transcends discreteness, this demonstrates that the presence of discrete particulars in a unity (is not because the unity that transcends discreteness has not yet affected them, but rather, it) stems from their inherent unity of the particulars, which is an expression and revelation of true unity.

We can posit that this is one of the reasons that the ideal manner of performing the *mitzvah* of the *four species* is to do it in the *sukkah*: By having the unity of discrete particulars of the four species follow after the unity of the *sukkah*, which transcends discreteness, the deeper meaning and origin of the unity of discrete particulars — i.e., genuine unity — is revealed.

9.

THE HOLINESS OF THE TIME OF SUKKOS IS SUPREME

Based on the aforementioned point,²⁹ that the unity of the *sukkah* surpasses the distinctions between spirituality and physicality — which is why it brings sanctity even into the physicality of the *sukkah* (the branches of the *schach* and the walls) — we can also understand the explanation regarding the sanctity of the Sukkos festival:

The sanctity of every festival is a result of the Divine revelations that shine forth on that festival. So, we must clarify: since the revelations during Sukkos (the clouds of glory)³⁰ are *makifim*,³¹ how can they have an (inward) effect on the days of Sukkos (which would otherwise be mundane), to render them sacred?

²⁹ {End of sec. 7.}

³⁰ {We sit in the *sukkah* to remember the clouds of glory that protected the Jewish people in the desert from the sun. See *Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 625. In spiritual terms, the Divine revelation of the *sukkah* is referred to as “the clouds of glory”; see *Siddur Im Dach*, p. 257ff. et al.}

³¹ {Lit., “surrounding,” connoting a Divine revelation that is not modulated to suit its recipients’ capacities, and therefore cannot be internalized.}

We can posit the following explanation: Since the {Divine} revelations on Sukkos transcend the distinction between spirituality and physicality, therefore, they can even infuse sanctity into the days of Sukkos, just as they infuse sanctity into the physicality of the *sukkah*.

A physical *sukkah* (*schach* and walls) stands out from the rest of the year: A *sukkah* even physically³² is “encompassing” ({and the nature of its sanctity different} especially considering that a *sukkah* must be constructed for the sake of the *mitzvah*). But since the time of Sukkos is (superficially) identical to the rest of the year, it turns out that by sanctifying the **time** of Sukkos (with Sukkos-sanctity)³³, the revelations of Sukkos (which are not limited to spirituality or physicality) are thereby even more prominently expressed than by how they are expressed through the physicality of the *sukkah*.

Nevertheless, since the sanctity of the *schach* and walls, and even of the time of Sukkos, is established by the revelations associated with the *sukkah* (and are not intrinsic), it shows that even the unity of the *sukkah* is bound by the limitations of unity that transcends discreteness. It is only that the unity that transcends discreteness is unrestricted, and can be revealed everywhere.

Conversely, with regard to the unity of the *four species*, since their union is (not only established by the performance of the *mitzvah* and the ensuing Divine revelation, but was also present beforehand) due to their makeup — i.e., the particulars are not united because of the property of unity (as something extrinsic) being **introduced into** them, but rather, the particulars are inherently united — this expresses true unity.

³² {Even physically, one can see the difference between the *sukkah* and other physical entities (unlike the days of Sukkos, which are externally identical to other days).}

³³ {I.e., the irradiation of holiness unique to the festival of Sukkos.}

10.

THE PHYSICAL AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE DIVINE

Based on the aforementioned points, we will also understand the relationship between desisting from work on this festival and building the Temple (as well as the reason this is achieved only through desisting from work, and not by observing the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*), and the relationship between taking the *four species* and the name of Moshiach:

The accomplishment of “the Temple’s construction” is that the revelation and function of the Temple, “the Throne of Glory, exalted from the beginning,” is drawn into and affects “the **place** of our Sanctuary.” And this “place” is of this world; and left untouched, all place is mundane. And therefore, this is achieved primarily by there being “on the first day... a holy convocation.” The Clouds of Glory also do not affect only the wood (i.e., the structure) of the *sukkah*, but also the days {of Sukkos}, transforming this **time** into a **festival** which **puts to rest** (nullifies) its {natural} pedestrian quality (doing so openly and completely — on the first day³⁴ — “you shall not do any laborious work”) by “calling”³⁵ (introducing into it {i.e., into all the days of the festival}) from the Holy.

Nevertheless, the effect on “the place of our Sanctuary” {i.e., infusing this place with sanctity} is only produced by a revelation **from Above** — “the Throne of Glory, exalted from the beginning” — which is drawn into that place.

Conversely, the novelty of “the name of Moshiach”³⁶ (Menachem, meaning that he will console us over the exile) is that he will (not only elicit Divine revelations, but will also) disclose the deeper meaning of exile — how the exile itself is the ultimate (“first”) good. As we will then exclaim, “**I**

³⁴ {We desist completely from work on the first day of Sukkos (in Israel, and on the first two days outside of Israel); during *chol hamoed*, although certain forms of work remain prohibited, we do not desist from work completely.}

³⁵ {The literal translation of “*mikra kodesh*,” translated throughout as “a holy convocation.”}

³⁶ {This addressed the question at the end of section 1 above.}

will thank You, Hashem, for You were angry with me.”³⁷ This is achieved not through the observance of the *mitzvah* of rejoicing in and of itself, but rather, as it is connected with taking the *four species*. These represent the idea that worldly matters themselves are inherently suitable conduits to express the Oneness of G-dliness.

-Based on talks delivered on *Simchas Beis HaShoeva* and *Simchas Torah* (the second *farbrengen* of *Shabbos Bereishis*), 5724 (1963)

³⁷ *Yeshayahu* 12:1.