

MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS  
SUKKOS 5782 - 2021



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## *From the desk of the Editors*

We are delighted to inaugurate Moadim 5782 with this Sukkos edition.

The Mishnah in Maseches Sukkah describes how on each day of Sukkos, the Kohanim would encircle the Mizbeiyach once. But on the final day, Hoshana Rabbah, they would circumambulate the Mizbeiyach seven times. Towering aravos would be emplaced at the corners of the Mizbeiyach, their tops arcing to form a canopy high above the surface of the altar. The assembled multitude, moved by the beauty of this mis en scene, would exclaim, "Yofi Lecha Mizbeiyach!"

Is this not remarkable? Of course, we are familiar with the Arba Minim: The majestic Lulav, the ambrosial Esrog, and the graceful Hadasim. Can any similar superlative be applied to the Aravos? The member of the quartet that embodies the quotidian Jew, unleavened with Torah or mitzvos, the Arava is seemingly humdrum and undistinguished. Yet, of all of the Daled Minim, it is the Arava which was elevated in the times of the Beis Hamikdash on Hoshana Rabbah, and today we have a remnant of this practice in the form of Hoshanos on Hoshana Rabbah. We take the Aravos and uplift them even beyond the other minim for their own special mitzvah.

Perhaps the secret of the Arava's dual nature, at once conventional and sublime, is directly related to its essential characteristic. The Hebrew word arava is derived from the word meaning mixture. The Aravos naturally are a component of a mélange, which must be attached to other elements.

First, the Arava is dependent on water, it thrives only in close proximity to water. Then during Sukkos, we unite it with the other Minim. Through being bound with the other of minim, the Aravos attain a sense of distinction and presence it does not possess on its own.

There are very few halachos that pertain to the Aravos. One is that it should look K'masor, it should not have jagged edges like the teeth of a saw. This is because the purpose of a saw is to divide a substrate into smaller fragments, whereas the essence of the Aravos is to forge elements together in a spirit of interconnection and unity.

MHS embodies all that is good about the Arava. Oftentimes, a girl comes to MHS possessed of incredible talent and has so much to give, and yet during her elementary school days, she found it hard to step forth out of the background and into the spotlight. However through the warmth and sense of community and camaraderie that we are provided within our beloved school's walls, each and every girl is given her opportunity to gleam and shine, coming together as one radiance that permeates and illuminates not only our school but our families, our communities and all of Klal Yisroel.

In this issue of Moadim, MHS unites, like the Daled Minim, and glows, enhancing the Simchas Yom Tov of each and every girl.

With love, wishing you a bright and joyous yom tov,

***The Moadim Crew***

CREDITS FOR QUOTES:  
Rabbi Moshe Bamberger,  
*Great Jewish Wisdom*

## *Message from the Menaheles*

It was with enormous gratification that I observed our eager students clamber off the bus and run breathlessly into the school building after the summer break. Their faces wreathed with smiles, animated voices raised, they greeted each other with joyous abandon - it was adolescence at its finest. In this *Moadim* publication, we explore the concept of *Chag HaSukkos* as *Z'man Simchaseinu*. Although each of the *shalosh regalim* is referred to as *chag*, *Sukkos* is quite especially characterized that way. As Rav Hirsch explains, *Sukkos* is meant to awaken most keenly the consciousness and the feeling of the nation, belonging together through the unifying force of Torah. I cannot help but draw a parallel to the manifest joy and vitality pulsating throughout the corridors of our school, born of the unifying force of a Torah education, and strengthened by the camaraderie of like-minded individuals committed to growth and excellence.

The words, והיית אך שמח, exhort us to make happiness a trait of character, the permanent nature of our entire existence. The word אך alludes to the persistence of this joy, even under circumstances that would be expected to disturb it.

It is my warmest *brachah* to my beloved תלמידות and their esteemed families that this joy accompany them beyond the *yom tov* of *Sukkos* into the rhythm of their daily lives. It is within the choreography of their daily existence that our students experience the joys of a Torah true life. In this *Moadim* edition, some of our students explore the concept of *simchah shel mitzvah*, sharing personal experiences that engendered in them true rejoicing. May the exhortation of אך שמח allow them to overcome challenges and to embrace their realities with happiness, focusing on the myriad blessings of their lives.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our *Moadim* leaders, Freida Bamberger, Ayelet Herskovitz, Michali Rosenberg, Elky Schwartz, and Chavi Weiner, who despite the brief period of formal classes, managed to pull off an impressive publication, under the brilliant leadership of Reb. Peshi Neuburger and Mrs. Sara Tendler. A special thank you to Zahava Schwartz, a talented Senior, who devoted her time and energies to laying out this publication, under the direction of our beloved and gifted Mrs. Dena Szpilzinger.

בברכת חג שמח,

**Mrs. Tsivia Yanofsky**

### *Potato Kugel and Politics*

By: Fayga Tziporah Pinczower

#### What Are We Really Celebrating?

At first glance, Sukkos seems to embody dichotomy. On the one hand, it is the Chag Ha'asif, a harvest celebration -- and for those unacquainted with the mitzvos and halachos pertaining to Sukkos, agriculture is the primary celebration, symbolized by the lulav and esrog. Moreover, the produce underscores ownership of land, roots and crops - essentially, security. Conversely, the sukkah demonstrates complete exposure, dependency and vulnerability.

Every person, like Avraham Avinu when purchasing a burial cave for Sarah, is a "Ger V'Toshav," both secure and vulnerable. Tellingly, the word ger is derived from gargar -- a seed. When one undergoes gerus he is severing his old roots but has not yet developed Jewish roots, leaving him much as a seed -- easily tossed by the slightest wind and representative of the insecurity of man. Each of us possesses an element of ger, yet is simultaneously the outgrowth of roots, or perhaps the roots ourselves.

Yechezkel HaNavi states, "The sin of Mitzrayim is that they did not observe the holiday of Sukkos." We can begin to understand this statement by considering Mitzrayim as a microcosm of all other nations, and applying our new-found insight into Sukkos. Other nations understand the celebration of security. They extol the Arch of Titus, the Palace of Versailles, and the Parthenon. Glorification of strength and victory. What they cannot comprehend is 9/11. Defeat, destruction -- vulnerability. The insecurity of man. A virtual non-nation besting a world power. This is America, we are strong, invincible even. Only other countries are vulnerable. Yet, we are reminded that no entity is invincible, as America's (arguably) longest war ends with the reinstatement of tyrannical, murderous tyrants. Yes, we are dwelling in the sukkah, all too exposed to outside forces.

There is a time-honored custom to read Megillas Koheles on Shabbos Chol Hamoed Sukkos. The Gemara raises a query regarding the canonization of Koheles in Tanach, due to its frequent contradictions. Perhaps, Koheles was included on the premise that life, and man himself, is full of contradictions as well. How apropos that we read the 'book of contradictions' every year on Sukkos, the holiday that highlights the complexity of man, pointing at once to his security and vulnerability.

In order to fully appreciate Shlomo HaMelech's message, we must analyze Koheles in the shadow of his other works-- Mishlei and Shir Hashirim. In Koheles, the wisest of all men introduces himself as "Koheles ben David," and again in Mishlei, as "Mishlei ben David." However, when beginning Shir Hashirim, he opens with "Shir Hashirim asher L'Shlomo!" Where's the mention of David? Among the various answers given, Rabbi Moshe Solovetchik suggests that Shlomo is expressing our dual relationship with Hashem- Who is both "Elokeinu" and "Elokei Avoseinu." Perhaps this is the difference between the two holidays which immediately precede Sukkos, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. While Rosh Hashanah places an emphasis on the Avos and Imahos, evidenced by the leining about Sarah Imeinu, the birth of Yitzchak and the subsequent Akeidah, Yom Kippur is about individual repentance. Sukkos combines the two and directs us to see Hashem in the life of our ancestors as well as in our own lives. Regrettably, a study conducted from 2017 to 2020 reports that 43 out of the 49 countries an-

alyzed have seen a shockingly rapid decline in religion. Interestingly, the most drastic declines occurred in economically prosperous countries, making America a trendsetter. It's no surprise that as citizens enjoy increasingly comfortable lifestyles, recognition of, and reliance upon, a Creator dwindles. According to the Pew Research Center, we shouldn't bet on a religious revival as the decline has only steepened from the Silent Generation to Baby Boomers to Millennials. Our Avos and Imahos were not strangers to this concept. Both Avraham and Yitzchak had two sons, one righteous and one who strayed. Perhaps, by peering into their lives, we can gain an understanding of how to transmit and maintain the flame of tradition.

After Yaakov leaves his fathers house, Hashem introduces Himself, emphasizing the generational link, "I am the G-d of Avraham and Yitzchak your father," to which Yaakov replies, "If You will be with me, provide food, clothing and allow me to return home then You will be my G-d." Yaakov is not "making a deal" with Hashem. Rather, he is constructing a personal relationship with Him now that he is outside the confines of his ancestors' tent. Nor does he demand a dramatic sea-splitting sort of miracle as basis for that connection; simply food to eat, clothes to wear and the ability to return home would suffice, gifts that most of us take for granted. Yaakov Avinu then references the "even," the monument he erected, and declares that it will become a "beis Elokim". The Mishkan and subsequent Beis Hamikdash epitomize the private love between Hashem and His people. They are the homes of the personal attachment which follows the public marriage ceremony at Har Sinai.

Koheles closes with the famous mandate, "after everything has been explained, follow Hashem and fear Him." Fear of G-d is something that can be transmitted from teacher to student, father to son, as is manifest when Yaakov addresses Hashem as "Pachad Avi Yitzchak," "the Fear of my father Yitzchak." Mishlei opens with the word "Divrei" which Rashi explains to mean 'divrei musar vetochacha' -- ethics! Perkei Avos! "Shema b'ni musar avicha"! Awe, rebuke and ethics can be transmitted throughout generations but love cannot. Shir Hashirim omits the mention of David because the love relationship depicted in its pages does not depend upon previous generations, it must be established by each individual. This provides newfound appreciation for the beautiful Chassidish minhag to shake the lulav and esrog in the sukkah. What an apt depiction of the holiday of Sukkos, which blends both the generational and personal relationships established on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur respectively.

Sadly, in recent years we have become increasingly susceptible to neglecting these relationships. In Europe of the previous centuries, when Jews were all too aware that at any moment there could be a pogrom, or attack, and that they could be killed, they felt a continual dependency upon, and need for, a relationship with the Master of the Universe. It is both a blessing and a curse that America provides a sanctuary for religious observance, as this kindness nurtures in many a false sense of security, and while we may see how Hashem was a Presence in the perilous lives of our ancestors we can easily miss His involvement in our own lives. Dangerously, when part of a relationship falls to the wayside the rest tends to dissolve as well. We must recognize Hashem in our own lives and fortify that personal relationship explored in Shir Hashirim and symbolized by the lulav and esrog, while simultaneously glorifying the ancestral link present in Koheles and the sukkah.

*Recollections of and on, a shiur presented by Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik*



**Cherri Citron, 12th Grade**

*“When performing the mitzvah of giving charity, the poor person should be treated with at least the same respect and dignity we give to our etrog on Sukkos”*

בעת שנותנים צדקה לעני ונמצא מקיים בהעני מצות צדקה... אז העני ממש כמו בחינת  
אתרוג בעת שנוטלו לצאת בו... אסור ליתן לו בזיון חלילה, וזהו איסור דאוריתא

*Bais HaLevi*

## *On Journeys and Destinations: The Lesson of the Esrog*

After the Yamim Noraim, the first thing we are commanded to do as we begin our performance of mitzvos anew is to take the Arba Minim. The Torah instructs us, 'ulekachtem lachem bayom harishon pri eitz hadar....,' specifying that "on the first day you shall take a citrus fruit...." There is much debate regarding the significance of the words "bayom harishon" – on the first day. Chazal (Midrash Tanchuma Emor) understands them as an allusion to Sukkos being rishon l'cheshbon avonos, the first day of calculating our deeds (and misdeeds) for the new year. But hasn't the new year already started with Rosh Hashanah? Furthermore, why is the reset of the annual cycle of Jewish life specifically associated with the pri eitz hadar – the esrog?

Perhaps an approach to resolving these questions is rooted in the very nature of the esrog. Chazal considered which fruit met the description of a pri eitz hadar. They determined that a necessary characteristic of the required species is ta'am eitzo u'piryo shaveh; the taste of its branch must be equivalent to the taste of its fruit. The esrog is the only fruit which has this attribute. Of course, this begs the question of why the Torah chose this quality, specifically, as the distinguishing requirement of the esrog?

Immediately following Sukkos, we read Parshas Bereishis. The parshah describes the process of Creation and details a transgression that was committed prior to the sin of Adam and Chava. Hashem instructed the earth to bring forth trees and plants. Implicit in Hashem's design was that the taste of all trees should be uniform throughout both their branches and fruit. Sinfully, our Sages teach us, the earth disobeyed, resulting in fruits that have tantalizing flavors, and stems and branches which do not. Which begs the question: What purpose was served by the Ribono Shel Olam's intention that a fresh and utopian world should be populated with flora that has a consistent flavor running through all the components of the organism? What element of the terrestrial blueprint, imbued with daas elyon, was lost when the earth disobeyed its divine purpose and brought forth fruit lacking this internal consistency (save for the notable exception of the esrog)? After all, if plants were intended to have stems, trunks, and roots that were equally nourishing and toothsome as their fruit, why create these elements in the first place; why not simply create plants that are composed of nothing but fruit?

Perhaps, encapsulated in the answer to this primordial conundrum, we can find a powerful lesson about the purpose of the cosmos and the role that b'nei adam play in creation. Hashem did not create a world of instant results and immediate gratification, a world composed solely of delectable fruit. Instead, He designed a reality in which desired outcomes require effort, are the effects of earlier causes, and must be nurtured and supported; a universe in which every ripening fruit is supported by a mass of woody sinews and spreading leaves. However, in firm refutation of the shallow contention that only the end result, the fruit, is relevant, Hashem sought to teach us that the journey, the effort, and the nisyonos that lead to the desired outcome are of equal criticality. For this reason, although the roots and bark are destined to serve merely as a scaffold on which the fruit can grow, they were intended to share the same taste, to remind us that the journey is equally important to the destination, that effort counts and is counted. The sin of the earth was that it spurned this Torah-true value system for one in which only results are measured; the esrog being the one exemplar of the true ideal of Yahadus.

In linking the annual calculation of our zechuyos and chataim to Sukkos rather than Rosh Hashanah, the Torah is urging us to be mindful of the lesson of the esrog, that the striving is as critical as the having. Our world is consumed with results, relentlessly emphasizing the destination and not the journey. The Torah is trying to show us that this is a mistaken approach, which runs counter to the one that Hakadosh Baruch Hu has tried to impress upon us since Briyas Ha'olam. We must also emphasize the experience, the values, and the "tastes" along the way. Only if the building blocks of our ultimate actions are themselves true to the essence of our Torah values will the result be of value. If we focus only on the accomplishment, without pausing to consider the path that leads up to it, even a seemingly unassailable achievement will be rendered meaningless and artificial.

Immediately following the Yamim Noraim, the Torah reminds us of this message. As we begin the new year, we must focus our attention on the process that prompts us to do mitzvos. What is the real intention underlying our actions?

With this in mind, we can understand why the journey of cheshbon avonos begins with Sukkos. The S'fas Emes explains that during the intermediate days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos, we are fully engrossed in the steps that are preparatory to the mitzvos of the upcoming Yom Tov. We construct and decorate our sukkos, obtain the arba minim, and prepare for a festive chag. Those days are suffused with a sense of anticipation; every Jew is aware that these actions, while joyous in their own right, are a prelude to the spiritual elevation that will follow on the chag itself. We are all focused on not only the ultimate result but the intermediate journey. By elevating the status of the esrog, and linking it to rishon l'cheshbon avonos, the Torah is reminding us to maintain this attitude all year long. For our mitzvos all year to constitute zechuyos, they must be anchored in preparations and facilitation that are as purposeful as the performance of the mitzvos themselves.

May we all be zocheh to have the opportunity to live and conduct ourselves in a world in which the bark and the fruit are both tasteful.

✍ Elki Schwartz (Adapted from a dvar Torah by Rav Eli Belizon)



**Chanie Malek, 12th Grade**



**Ellie Trapedo, 10th Grade**

## *Shemini Atzeres: The Grand Finale*

Imagine you throw a grand party for everyone you know, full of tasteful food, dancing, and fun. As you mingle, you let all your guests know that whoever stays to the very end will be treated to an inspiring shiur. Those who came for the fun and games will quickly sneak away after indulging themselves, but those who understand what the real pleasure will be, stay, and participate in an engaging shiur which offers a rewarding lesson.

When B'nei Yisrael were in Yerushalayim, 70 korbanos were brought in the Beis Hamikdash during the week of Sukkos. The Gemara explains that these sacrifices corresponded to the 70 nations, as the Beis Hamikdash was open to all people. At the end of Sukkos, however, Hashem added a day, Shemini Atzeres, when one korban was offered solely for the Jews. It is a day dedicated to our intimate relationship with Hashem, when we focus all our energies on that which we alone know is important, our closeness with Him.

🕊️ *Michali Rosenberg*

## *The Mitzvah of Sukkos*

In Parshas Emor, the Torah enumerates all of the moadim and the mitzvos associated with them. In regard to Chag HaSukkos the Torah commands us, (ויקרא כג, מב), "בסכת תשבו שבעת ימים" to live in the Sukkah for seven days. The Torah adds that the reason for this is,

"למען ידעו דרתיתכם כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציאני אותם מארץ מצרים" (ויקרא כג, מג), in order that all your generations will know that I caused B'nei Yisrael to live in Sukkos when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. It is important to observe that in the entire Parshas Hamoadim, this is the only mention of Yetzias Mitzrayim. It is not even mentioned with respect to Chag HaPesach! The Meshech Chochmah explains that the ultimate purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim was to release us from servitude to Pharaoh, enabling us to be servants of Hashem exclusively. Therefore in Parshas Behar, after presenting the laws of Eved Ivri and commanding that Jewish slaves go free after six years, HaShem explains,

"כי לי בני ישראל עבדים עבדים עבדי הם אשר הוצאתי אותם מארץ מצרים" (ויקרא כה, נה), because B'nei Yisrael, whom I took out of Egypt, are my servants and cannot be (permanent) servants to anyone else. The Gemara in Bava Metziah rephrases this idea; "עבדי הם ולא עבדים לעבדים", they are My servants and cannot be servants to servants. As a consequence of Yetzias Mitzrayim, B'nei Yisrael can only be servants to Hashem. The Meshech Chochmah points out that this exclusive connection comes about through fulfilling the mitzvos that sanctify B'nei Yisrael and place us within the protective sphere of Hashem. Nearly all mitzvos involve only one part of the body. Exceptions to this are aliyah la'regel and yeshiva basukkah, mitzvos which are performed with the entire body. And even these two are different from each other. While Aliyah la'regel is observed with the presence of one's whole body in Yerushalayim, there is no particular physical action required. On the other hand, sukkah is the ultimate example of a mitzvah performed with the entire body; one's physical actions are necessary in order to fulfill the requirements of eating, drinking, and sleeping in the sukkah. Therefore, it is the mitzvah of sukkah that sanctifies our bodies and physical existence to HaShem such that we can not be servants to anyone else, thereby affirming our connection to HaShem which was begun when he redeemed us from Egypt. Based on this we can understand why Yetzias Mitzrayim is explicitly mentioned in connection with Chag HaSukkos

🕊️ *Chavi Weiner*

# סוכות



*Zahava Schwartz, 12th Grade*



**Hudi Mandel**

# *Master Pieces:*

*Glimpses of our Gedolim, Masters of our Mesorah*



*This is considered to be the most accurate portrait of the Vilna Gaon of the many that are extant.*

# The Vilna Gaon

The Vilna Gaon, who was *niftar* on Chol Hamo'ed Sukkos of 1797, was an unparalleled *talmid chacham* and the leader of Lithuanian Torah Jewry. Just before his passing, as he sat in his beloved *sukkah*, he lamented that he was about to leave a world with so many opportunities to serve his Creator. As he held his *tzitzis* and drew them close to his heart he said, "In this world, for a few coins, one can buy a pair of *tzitzis* through which one can merit seeing the face of the *Shechinah*! Once I leave this world, though, all the money in the world will not avail me of such an extraordinary opportunity." As we sit in our *sukkos*, surrounded by the temporary walls and *schach* which represent the flimsiness of this world, we must remind ourselves that the true treasures of life are not the material ones that the world pursues, but rather, the priceless eternal ones that we can acquire in every moment that we spend on earth.

## **The Vilna Gaon's Quotable Quotes**

*"If man is not ascending, he is inevitably descending."*

*"The best way to influence others is by filling yourself up, so that the overflow will spill onto those around you."*

## **The Vilna Gaon: A Sukkos Story**

One year, the Vilna Gaon was in need of the Daled Minim, and sent his Gabba'im to see if any travelers would be willing to give up their own lulav and esrog for the great sage. They found someone who had what they were looking for and asked him for this great favor, to which he responded, "Gladly, but on one condition: I must receive all the reward that the Vilna Gaon will earn for doing this mitzvah." Although the Gabba'im were unsure of how the Gaon would react, they agreed to this condition. When they told him what had transpired, the Gaon smiled and said, "I always wondered whether I do mitzvos for the sake of the reward. Now, I am so glad that I will be able to perform a mitzvah clearly for the sole purpose of doing the will of Hashem!"

*Frieda Bamberger*

## *From the Ages of the Sages: The Lesson of Ushpizin*

Immediately after the incredible uplift of the Yamim Noraim, when we coronate HaKadosh Baruch Hu in awe, and He forgives us for all of our misdeeds and misjudgments, we usher in the multifaceted Yom Tov of Sukkos. Perhaps the most uniquely captivating custom associated with Sukkos is that of welcoming the ushpizin-- the seven shepherds of Klal Yisroel whose neshamos come to visit us on Sukkos. There are two ways in which people invite the ushpizin-- in chronological order, or, based on Kabbalah, in the order of the seven middos, each of which is associated with one of these personalities. The Kabbalistic order begins with Avraham, who embodied the middah of Chesed, then Yitzchak, who modeled Gevurah, followed by Yaakov, the exemplar of Tifferes. Next comes Moshe, who grasped the middah of Netzach, Aharon, the paradigm of Hod, and Yosef- the prototype of Yesod. Finally, David HaMelech, brings with him the middah of Malchus. According to the chronological order, however, the ushpizin are brought in slightly differently: the first three nights are the same, reserved for Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, respectively. Then comes Yosef, followed by Moshe, Aharon, and David HaMelech. Upon examining the chronological order of the ushpizin, though, one will notice that it seems to be inaccurate: Moshe Rabbeinu comes before Aharon HaKohein, when we know that in fact, Aharon HaKohein is three years older than Moshe Rabbeinu! How can we make sense of this and consider it to be chronological?

Rav Matisyahu Salamon, the Mashgiach Ruchani of the famed Bais Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, provides a beautiful answer to this question which teaches us a fundamental lesson for life. He explains that it is not just about when they were born, but rather, their ages are measured from the point at which they began to contribute to Klal Yisrael. Moshe Rabbeinu was "עולה לגדולה"-- he began to reach his potential in fulfilling his G-d given mission-- before Aharon HaKohein did. This is because Moshe Rabbeinu was charged with the responsibility of leading the Jewish People before Aharon HaKohein was appointed as the first Kohein Gadol. So, they are invited to our sukkos in chronological order not according to physical birth, but rather, according to spiritual leadership 'birth.'

Spiritual leadership demands prioritizing the relationship of your people with Hashem before your own needs and comfort. In a sense, Chag HaSukkos trains all Jews to cultivate that ability. As we leave the comfort of our homes to sit in the sukkah, we are reminded that our physical world is transient, and that what matters is the time we spend "בצל קל"-- in the embrace of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. We reaffirm our awareness that "לה" -- everything belongs to Hashem, and His will that we perform mitzvos and come close to Him far outweighs any material goals and desires we may have. What better way to emerge from the lofty aura of the Yamim Noraim, when we crown the Melech Malchei Hamelachim and He forgives us for all of our wrongdoings, than to step right into the sukkah, an indication that we are ready to put His will before ours. If we are successful, we will emerge from these days having not only aged physically, but matured spiritually as well. May we all be zocheh, b'ezras Hashem, to really internalise the message of our ushpizin this Sukkos, and achieve a measure of aliyah l'gedulah.

✿ Emma Cohen (Adapted by a Shiur from Rav Daniel Staum)

*"When I go to Heaven, I am not afraid they will ask me why I wasn't like Moshe or King David. I will say that I couldn't be like them. I am afraid they will ask me "Why weren't you Zusha?" - and then what will I say?"*

*"אם ישאלני בעולם האמת למה לא היית כמשה רבינו, אדע מה להשיב..."*

*"אולם אם ישאלני למה לא היית זושיא - יסתתמו טענותי."*

✿ R' Zusha of Anapoli

# ושמחת בחגך:

## *Spotlight on Simchah shel Mitzvah*



**Tami Eberstark, 11th Grade**

Rambam closes the halachos of Sukkos by emphasizing the obligation of a Jew to experience joy in the performance of all mitzvos. We are grateful to the students and faculty members of MHS who shared with us recollections of personal moments of simchah shel mitzvah.

This Rosh Hashanah I felt a שמחה של מצוה at the time of Tekias Shofar. It was actually as the בעל תוקע said שהחיינו. I was overwhelmed with hakaras hatov to know that we are all beginning a New Year together. I was overjoyed to be hearing the sound of the Shofar filling the room loud and clear!

🌸 *Reb. Fink*

A “simcha shel mitzva” moment that I think many of us have been fortunate enough to experience is that of witnessing small children learn how to make brachos on their food. They recite their brachos loudly, slowly and carefully, their eyes alight with excitement upon reciting the bracha, imbued with a sense of accomplishment.

🌸 *Nechama Schwartz*

I have great Simcha from the mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah. My entire extended family gets together for Sukkos and when we're all sitting under the sukkah together it reminds me of the importance of family and maintaining the traditions of Yiddishkeit.

🌸 *Bailey Schuckman*

Last year, my siblings and I decided to actually sleep in the Sukkah and we had a blast! It was like an outdoor camping sleepover for us, but in our Sukkah, and it really made our Sukkah feel like a part of us. It enhanced my yom tov so much!

🌸 *Mindy Weiss*

It was Lag B'omer night, and I was in New Square. I noticed a woman walking through the aisles, collecting tzedakah, so I handed her a few dollars. When I sat back down I felt an urge to give her more money, so I asked my mother for a larger bill. By the time my mother found the money, the woman was gone. I looked for her for a few minutes, and was about to give up, when I remembered learning that it's never easy to do a mitzva. So I scanned through the large crowds, and walked through thousands of women, but I couldn't find her. After the ceremony had ended, and the area had cleared, I spotted her walking out. I ran over to her, and put the money in her pushka. A big smile lit up her face, and then I felt something well up inside of me. The happiness of doing something for others, the joy and satisfaction of doing a mitzvah. I left there with a big smile on my face. I realized that real happiness comes from when you try hard to give, and that what you give is nothing compared to the joy and reward you get in return.

🌸 *Sarah Pinczower*

When I join my mother and deliver Tomchei Shabbos packages, I knock on the door. When the woman opens the door and gives me a big smile and says thank you, I am overcome with true happiness knowing I was able to help her prepare for Shabbos.

🌸 *Ariella Gold*

On Pesach we preform the mitzvah of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim. There's a Persian tradition to actually experience the galus and feel the way the Jews were whipped. Sephardim are creative so we smack each other with scallions. I don't know if you have ever experienced being whipped with a scallion, but it hurts. (And you smell like onion). But as all the adults are singing dayeinu we run around and it's actually the one thing I can count on year after year. It is then that I truly identify as a member of Klal Yisrael.

🌸 *Lily Notkin*



**Naomi Hymowitz, 12th Grade**

This past summer I was walking back from an event near our very own MHS when an elderly woman across the street tripped and fell head first onto the pavement. Multiple New Yorkers in the bustling crowds stopped to help, and many whipped out their phones to call 911. I quickly crossed the street to see if I could help when I noticed that none of the valiant bystanders had carried out their plans to call and the woman was still on the ground and clearly in pain. Instinctively I dialed for help and remained with the woman until the ambulance arrived. In the moment I was too nervous to feel any pride, but when help arrived, people began to pepper me with questions, particularly concerning the YU ID necklace I was wearing. It was then that I felt an obligation to explain that I was Jewish and thereby make a Kiddush Hashem. As I boarded the bus heading home, I held my head a little higher, remembering that I am a fortunate player among, and representative of, the Jewish people, tasked with the responsibility to better the world at every opportunity.

☺ *Fayga Tziporah Pinczower*

A moment where I had that seemingly small yet overwhelming feeling of happiness doing a mitzvah; creating packages of clothing for Yad Leah. The enjoyment I got from packaging wonderful, practical items to send to needy families in Israel, resulted in simchah shel mitzvah, the happiness of accomplishing a task as well as following in Hashem's ways.

☺ *Sarah Fried*

Every time I hear the shofar blown during the months of Elul and Tishrei I feel a special spark of happiness that I get to do teshuvah and start with a clean slate.

☺ *Adina Metzger*

In my camp, this past summer we visited Hamaspik center. It is a place where girls who are very low functioning get the resources they need. We danced with the girls, did projects and hugged each girl as if she was our best friend. Everyone in the room felt the simcha and the achdus that ignited the room with energy. It was a real mitzvah that you experienced so much joy, so much simcha, after knowing that you just impacted so many girls' lives.

☺ *Atara Friedman*

This Rosh Hashanah, I had the awesome zechus of spending Yom Tov with my grandmother in the hallowed Telshe Yeshiva in Wickliffe, Ohio. Above the cavernous Beis Medrash, I sat in the front row of the Ezras Nashim, surrounded by seriously committed women who came just to have a conversation with the Ribono Shel Olam and plead for all of their needs. One of those special women was Rebbetzin Miriam Barkan, the widow of a very close friend of my grandfather zt"l and daughter of the well-known Telzer Rosh Yeshiva Reb Eliyahu Meir Bloch zt"l. The kedushah in the air was palpable.

What made the tefillah so electric was the fact that there were no individuals present, rather it was a Beis Medrash filled with one large, unified Tzibbur with one purpose-- sending off our Tefillos to Shamayim in one beautiful package. When everyone thundered "אמן יהא שמיה רבא" in unison, you did not hear an individual; rather the kol of the tzibbur is all that was heard. Being part of such an energized, sacred, and genuine davening resulted, for me, in a deep sense of simchah shel mitzvah.

As I was leaving Cleveland, I was fortunate to have a few more precious moments with Rebbetzin Barkan and my grandmother. The rebbetzin's parting words were a bracha tailor-made for me, which she concluded by telling me what her father zt"l always emphasized to her, לעולם אל תהי ברכה מאהבה קלה בעיניך, a berachah offered with love should never be taken lightly. Indeed, it is not.

🕊️Emma Cohen

My grandfather, Lev Tzyvkin z"l was born and raised in the Soviet Union where it was illegal and extremely dangerous to break the law and live openly as a Jew. Parents were afraid to share Judaism with their children for fear that the Russian government would take the children into foster care and send the parents to jail. This was the punishment for practicing the Jewish religion. However, after he came to America, his child (my mother) shared Judaism with him. He so much enjoyed spreading joy to others through chesed. He was an engineer and a real do-er, so he was always fixing and building things— not only in his house but for his neighbors, friends, and relatives as well. When it came to fixing things, his energy was endless. His specialty, of course, was the mitzvah of building the sukkah. I used to help him, my Dedushka (as I called him in Russian), and it was our special time together. Weeks before Sukkos, he would already begin talking about building the sukkah and we would find a day together that I had off from school. Together we would go to the shed and start dragging out what we needed. He would always tell me that something was too heavy for me and then I would go out of my way to show him that I, in fact, COULD lift it. In about half a day, our sukkah was up. In recent years, I even got a speaker to enhance our sukkah-building-experience by listening to my music (he was a big fan.) There was so much joy, so much positive energy, such purity in this special experience shared by just the two of us. It was true simchah shel mitzvah. He was niftar in March 2020, after becoming ill with COVID, and Sukkos is not the same without him.

🕊️Naomi Hymowitz

On Simchas Torah of 5743 I was humbled by a display of simchah shel mitzvah which took my breath away. My husband and I and our infant daughter had arrived in Eretz Yisrael a couple of months earlier, intending to spend a year in the Geulah section of Yerushalayim. We were to be the first occupants of my family's brand new apartment on Rechov Malchei Yisrael, and the prospect was exciting. Until we got there, and found that our 'dream home' was missing windows, plumbing, and electricity. On to Plan B. Our cousins, Rav Eliyahu Chaim and Chana Shapira z"l, who were two generations our senior, offered us one of the four rooms in their apartment, for as long as we needed it. We accepted, and their home quickly became ours. Summer came to an end, and we spent most of the Yamim Noraim and Sukkos with the Shapiras, who had by that time taken us under their wing as children.

Chana had grown up as one of five children in a prestigious Yerushalmi family, and on Chol Hamoed, her eldest brother, Rav Alexander Berlin, who had come to be the patriarchal figure in the extended family, passed away. As halachah dictates, the levayah and burial took place immediately, but the shivah was postponed until after the chag. The sadness was palpable, and, assuming that Chana and Rav Eliyahu Chaim would prefer to have only immediate family with them for Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah, we began to make arrangements to be elsewhere. They would not hear of it. 'This is your home now and you'll stay with us.' We agreed, though we worried that we might be in for an awkward yom tov. On the night of Simchas Torah, after Hakafof and towards the end of the seudah, family members began to arrive. They all sat around the dining room table, and began to sing. Very softly at first; the tune was mellow but I couldn't make out the words. But after a few rounds, the mood of these soon-to-be mourners actually picked up. They sang more loudly, almost joyfully, and I was able to catch the Aramaic lyrics. The song, I learned later, was very well-known, but I cannot imagine a scene which more aptly embodies its meaning than the one I witnessed that Simchas Torah night.

כד יתבין ישראל ועסקין בשמחת התורה  
קודשא בריך הוא אומר לפמליא דיליה:  
חזו חזו בני חביבי  
דמשתכחין מצערא דילהון ועסקין בחדוותא דילי

When the Jewish people sit absorbed in the joy of Torah  
Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to His Heavenly court:  
'Look, look, at my dear children  
Who are continually immersed in their own pain  
But absorb themselves in the joy that is Mine!'

☞ Reb. Neuburger

*"All of my lofty spiritual achievements were attained  
through joy in the performance of a mitzvah"*

והעידו על האר"י ז"ל שאמר שהמעלה העליונה שהשיג באה לו  
על ידי שהיה שמח בכל עוז בשמחה של מצוה

☞ The Arizal

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