

Succos 2016

1.

Tiferes Shimshon (Vayikra page 250-251)

“You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of a citron tree, the branches of date palms, twigs of a plaited tree, and brook willows; and you shall rejoice before Hashem, your God, for a seven day period.” (23, 40)

"ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדור כפת תמרים וענף עץ עבת וערבי נחל ושמחתם לפני יקוק אלהיכם שבעת ימים."

The Medrash Tanchuma (parshas Emor siman 23) asks the following question; do we take the daled minim on the first of the month? We take the daled minim on the fifteenth. Why then does the pasuk say the first? The simple answer to the Medrashes question is that the Torah is referring to the first day of Succos. (See also Pesachim (5a)) The Medrash answers that Succos is the first day that sins are accounted for. ("ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון. וכי ראשון הוא, והלא יום חמשה עשר הוא?") (אלא מאי ראשון? ראשון לחשבון עונות.)

What is the explanation of this Medrash? Why is the first day of Succos specifically the first day that sins are accounted for? Why isn't the day after Yom Kippur the first day that sin is accounted for? During Yom Kippur we become a new entity. We become like a new born who is sinless. We must be careful not to dirty up our new bodies. This can be compared to parent who buys their children new clothing before a holiday. They instruct their children not to get the new clothing dirty. Buying this new clothing is amongst the holiday preparations. Our becoming anew and clean over Yom Kippur is preparation for what will occur throughout the year. Rosh Hashana, the aseres yemei teshuva (ten days of repentance) and Yom Kippur are all about fearing Hashem. The time period after Yom Kippur is all about loving Hashem. We were given a new being in order to properly greet Succos. The Vayikra Raba (30, 7) says that from Yom Kippur until Succos everyone is very busy with many mitzvos, such as Suka and the daled minim. Everyone is still wearing the new clothing. No one had time to sin. Then Succos, which is really a continuation of the previous holidays, approaches as the Gra explains. **It is for this reason that Succos is the first day that sins are accounted for. It's because we are definitely still wearing our clean clothing since we didn't sin and it's a continuation of the previous holidays.**

2.

Tiferes Shimshon (Vayikra page 252-253)

Why do we take daled minim? What is the point of taking the daled minim?

The Medrash Tanchuma (parshas Emor siman 19) and the Vayikra Raba explain that the daled minim correspond to different parts of our body. The body parts that they correspond to, serve as a connection between us and others. The hadasim correspond to the eyes. Eyes enable us to see. Our ability to see connects us to those who are around us. When we see something, that image enters and gets processed by our brain. We will naturally connect with those who we constantly meet and see. The hadasim symbolize our acquisition of knowledge via seeing. Many times, if we think about that which we are seeing, we will gain knowledge. Many times we can understand better by seeing, rather than just merely hearing it. The question arises; since the hadasim correspond to the eyes, why are there three hadasim? There should only be two hadasim that correspond to two eyes. The three hadasim correspond to the three Avos; Avraham,

Yitzchok and Yaakov. We should strive to make our vision similar to the vision of the Avos. We should strive to emulate the ways of the Avos. Another answer, explains the Riya Mehimna (parshas Pinchas page 256a), is that there are three main eye colors; black, brown and blue. The lulav corresponds to our spin. Another answer, explains the Imrei Yosher (Vayikra Raba (30, 14)) is that the three hadasim correspond to our two eyes and brain. Our brain is needed to process that which our eyes see. The aravos correspond to the lips. Our lips enable us to breathe and speak. The two aravos correspond to the two lips. Furthermore, they are both shaped similarly. The lulav corresponds to the spin. The spin connects our other body parts together. If we didn't have a spin our other body parts would not be able to operate properly. The esrog corresponds to the heart. Actions performed without our heart are lacking.

3.

The Gemara in Suka (2a) says that we should leave our set dwelling and sit in a temporary structure. (צא מדירת קבע ושב בדירת עראי.) How does this Gemara coincide with the Torah obligation to rejoice during Succos? The Rambam (hilchos lulav perek ches Halacha 12) writes that Succos has extra happiness more than all of the other holidays. Will leaving our house not detract from our high level of happiness? Rabbi Yaakov Nyman (Darchei Mussar pages 283-284) explains that **true happiness can only be attained when we realize that this world is only temporary. One who thinks that the purpose of our existence is the pleasures of this world is mistaken.** One who makes this world a set dwelling will not have internal joy. One, who is overly involved with matters pertaining to this world such as his desire to fulfill temporary lusts, is lacking true joy. This type of individual will most probably be jealous of others as well. The Koheles Raba (1) points out that someone who has one hundred dollars will want two hundred dollars. People typically want more than they have, unfortunately never being satisfied with their lot. However, one who realizes that this world is just temporary will not get jealous and will have true happiness. **True joy can only be attained through spiritual pursuits.** There is even a higher level than realizing that this world is just temporary and being happy with our lot. This level is also more difficult to attain as well. That is, to be happy with our friends success as well. The highest level is rejoicing when people who we dislike are having success. Due to the aforementioned idea, we can easily explain why we lain Koheles on Succos. Shalomo Hamelech says that everything is vanity. He says this numerous times. **Seemingly this is an inappropriate time to lain Koheles. Laining Koheles might detract from our happiness, which would be contrary to one of the major aspects and obligations of this holiday. The question therefore arises; why do we lain Koheles on Succos? It is in order that we will not get out of hand during Succos. There is a difference between maintained happiness and foolishness. Another answer is as follows; only once we realize and pinpoint what is foolish, we will attain true happiness.** Succos is a time when the harvest is over and the produce is ready for consumption. There is an overabundance of monetary success and physicality's. The Torah therefore commands us to leave our houses and sit in huts. When we do this, we will realize what vanities are, and what aren't. Shalomo isn't coming to decrease our happiness; on the contrary, his goal is to increase our joy. The more of the vanities we realize, the greater level of joy we could attain. (Shemen Hatov pages 149-151.)

The Gemara in Berachos (31a) relates that some Rabbis broke a glass cup at a wedding in order to control the levity.

4.

The Vayikra Raba (30, 12) relates that the daled minim correspond to four different types of people. The Esrog smells good and taste good. It therefore corresponds to talmedai chachamim who also perform good deeds. The lulav taste good, but smells bad. It therefore corresponds to talmedai chachamim who don't perform good deeds. The hadasim smells good, but taste bad. It therefore corresponds to ignoramuses who perform good deeds. The aravos smell bad and taste bad. It therefore corresponds to ignoramuses who don't perform good deeds. What should be done with the aravos? They can't be destroyed or left out, because all daled minim are necessary. Rather, they should all be tied together and they will atone for each other. The esrog will help the aravos. The hadasim will help the lulav. The lulav will help the hadasim. (פרי עץ הדר אלו ישראל מה) אתרוג זה יש בו טעם ויש בו ריח כך ישראל יש בהם בני אדם שיש בהם תורה ויש בהם מעשים טובים כפות תמרים אלו ישראל מה התמרה הזו יש בו טעם ואין בו ריח כך הם ישראל יש בהם שיש בהם תורה ואין בהם מעשים טובים וענף עץ עבות אלו ישראל מה הדס יש בו ריח ואין בו טעם כך ישראל יש בהם שיש בהם מעשים טובים ואין בהם תורה וערבי נחל אלו ישראל מה ערבה זו אין בה טעם ואין בה ריח כך הם ישראל יש בהם בני אדם שאין בהם לא תורה ולא מעשים טובים ומה הקדוש ברוך הוא (עושה להם לאבדן אי אפשר אלא אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא יוקשרו כולם אגודה אחת והן מכפרין אלו על אלו).

The Chafetz Chaim explains that the Esrog is different than the other minim. The esrog has a pitom (stem) which is very delicate. Additionally, after the four minim are taken, the esrog is returned to its own delicate and special section, it is stored separately from the other minim. The Chofetz Chaim explains this is how a talmid chacham needs to act. The Gemara in Yuma (86a) says that a talmid chacham needs to mix with people and make a kiddush Hashem. (מעורב עם) **This should be done when the talmid chacham joins them for spiritual purposes, such as davening, teaching others Torah and other mitzvos. However, at other times, the talmid chacham should separate himself.**

The question arises; why does the talmid chacham need to attach/mix/associate/blend with others? What does the talmid chacham gain by being with others? The Bechuray Aviv (quoted in the likutim section in the back of Vayikra Raba) explains that this is in order that the talmid chacham will be humble. People who are knowledgeable must be careful not to get haughty. When the talmid chacham interacts with people who are on a lower level than him, he will be more humble.

Perhaps another answer could be as follows. The Gemara in Shevuos (39a) says that every Jew must help every Jew. (כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה.) **The talmid chacham needs to do chesed just as others do. Therefore, he must help other even if will be unbeneficial for him.**

Another answer is that the talmid chacham himself benefits. See Beer Moshe (Sefer Yehoshua page 84) who quotes the Noam Elimelech (parshas Devarim).

5.

Chafetz Chaim hachadash, Vayikra pages 206-207. Also Nesivi Asher page 96.

There was a story of a completely ignorant and wealthy villager. When his daughter was ready to get married, he went to the city and told the Rosh Yeshiva that he was willing to fully support the top bachor in the Yeshiva. All of his needs will be provided for explained the villager. A bachor was chosen, and they got married. When Succos approached the chason asked for a very nice esrog. The father in law went to the city to buy the most expensive esrog. He bought a very beautiful and expensive esrog. It didn't have even the slightest scratch on it. When he returned to his town, another completely ignorant and wealthy father in law saw him and inquired where he

was returning from. He explained. The second father in law then asked to split the esrog half and he will pay for half of it in order that he could give half of it to this son in law. When the first father in law returned home, he informed his son in law that he bought the most expensive, best and nicest esrog that they were selling. He then showed the esrog to the chason. The chason almost fainted. He asked, what is this? The father in law responded that this is the best of the best. He proceeded to relate the details of the story and how and why it was cut in half. The chason explained that **it is better to have a cheaper full esrog than the most expensive esrog that is cut in half. A full esrog that doesn't have the best quality is still kosher unlike a half esrog that is the best quality which is completely invalid. The Chafetz Chaim explains that many times people are one sided in regards to serving Hashem. They tend to only focus on mitzvos between man and Hashem or between man and man. Both mitzvos between man and Hashem or between man and man are vital and must be focused on. It is better that we should fulfill both mitzvos between man and Hashem or between man and man in not the best manner, than to fulfill only one of them in the best manner. We must be balanced and well rounded. Those who perform mitzvos between man and Hashem, but belittle mitzvos between man and man, or those who perform mitzvos between man and man, but belittle mitzvos between man and Hashem are like a beautiful, but split esrog.**

Why aren't middos (good characteristics) amongst the 613 mitzvos? For example, why isn't anger or arrogance listed amongst the 613 mitzvos? Rabbi Chaim Vital (Shari Kedusha chalek alef shar beis) answers that middos are a prerequisite to the Torah as stated in the Vayikra Raba (9, 3); proper etiquette precedes the Torah (דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה). To a certain extent proper middos are common sense.

As a side point, let's relate another reason as to why middos aren't amongst the 613 mitzvos. The Or Samach (Rambam hilchos Talmud Torah perek alef Halacha beis) explains that the Torah can't command something that depends on the person. Everyone has different expectations. Therefore the Torah is unable to set a specific command regarding middos. (כל המצוות המה שווים) לפחות שבפחותים ולמשה רבינו ע"ה, דתורה אחת יהיה לכם כתיב (במדבר טו, כט), וחיוב המצוה גבול יש לה, כמו נטילת אתרוג בנינוע בעלמא יצא, רק המדקדקים נושאים אותו כל היום וכיו"ב, ולכך לא כתבה התורה מדות רק ברמז, ולכך אין זה חוק בפרט שווה לכלל הישראלי, רק כל אחד לפי ערכו, וכן בגאווה וכי"ב, וכן לפני משורת הדין, ובקור (חולים וקבורה וכו).

Rabbi Shimshon Pinkes (Tiferes Avos page 22) says the Shulchan Aruch teaches us the proper Halacha primarily regarding mitzvos between man and God (בין אדם למקום).

Sometimes, when it comes to mitzvahs between man and his friend (בין אדם לחבירו) a person may feel he doesn't need to look at the Halacha. This is so false and can lead to many errors and strife!

Even though not all halachos between man and his friend are in Shulchan Aruch, the Mussar Sefarim are our Shulchan Aruch for bein adam l'chaveiro (man and his friend)!

It is related in the biography of Rav Pam (Rav Pam page 330) that he **would have a paper with him on which he wrote a statement of the Gra (Even Shlomo Perek 1) that 'the main avoda (service) in this world is to fix ones middos, if not why is he alive?'** Rav Pam explains that it is worthwhile to constantly review this statement because every time one sees this statement, it brings new chizuk (strengthening of the spirit). **This was found 18 months before Rav Pam Zt'l passing. Even at this point in Rav Pam's life he felt that he needed chizuk with regard to middos. What should we say about ourselves!**