

חג הסוכות

This adaptation is dedicated
in honor of my wife, Devorah.
Mazal Tov to the Blass & Shafran Families
on the brisim of their sons this week!!!

ימי חג הסוכות

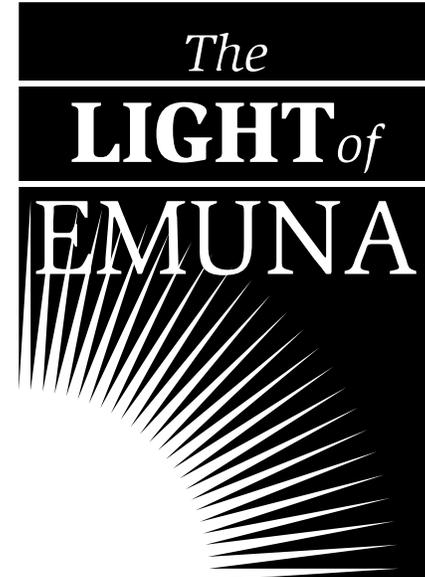
Normal conduct dictates that when one is comfortably seated in his own home, under the shade of his roof, he feels secure and does not fret. As soon as he leaves his home, his sense of security diminishes and he begins to worry. But, the Jewish people are different, throughout the year, when we sit in our homes, we are apprehensive – perhaps we will become arrogant and forget our Creator. When Succos arrives and we leave our homes and enter the shade of the Sukkah, we are filled with *bitachon*, *emuna*, and joy. We are not in the shadow of our roofs – we are in the shade of the wings of the *Shechina*.¹

חג שכלו שמחה Festival of Complete Joy

When we sit in the Sukkah, we are elated because we experience Hashem's Presence. Succos is the revelation of the unique love between Hashem and the Jewish people. The Sukkah is the embrace in which Hashem envelopes us with his right hand. "And his right hand will embrace me"² – the Arizal says is a reference to Sukkah. We are encircled by holy partitions that separate us from everything negative and from anything that can distance us from Hashem, G-d forbid. And, above us is the holy *schach* – when we sit beneath it, we are beneath the wings of the Divine Presence.

A Jew experiences a special kind of closeness to Hashem when he is inside the Sukkah. We must

¹ התודעה
² ימינו תחבקני (שיר השירים ח, ג)



Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's "Ohr Ha'Emuna"

utilize every possible moment to sit in the Sukkah, to push off anything that is not urgent in favor of another minute in the Sukkah. There were tzaddikim who would not leave the Sukkah for the full seven day duration, except in rare instances and for very brief periods.

We must urge and allow ourselves time alone in the Sukkah, time to talk to Hashem, to thank Him for this precious gift – to return his embrace.

Succos is the perfection of happiness. We are delighted with Hashem and we experience the amazing light of holiness – not merely when we *daven*, not only when we blow the *Shofar* – even when we eat, drink and dance. Our connection with Hashem is complete, in all situations and at all times. That is the essence of this holiday. We must connect to the cycle of joy of the days of the festival – like Succos was in the *Beis Hamikdash*, when they did not cease dancing and singing for seven entire days – they did not sleep for seven days because of the overwhelming light and joy. When a person is ecstatic – he needs almost no sleep. The gladness stems from the many *mitzvos* with which this holiday is endowed. "A person must always run to the joy of a *mitzvah*, for there is nothing greater than the cheerfulness experienced during the performance of a *mitzvah* - it is more precious to HKB"H than the *mitzvah* itself."

Moreinu Harav: Even though it is a *mitzvah* to

be happy on all of the Yomim Tovim – on Succos there is an extra *mitzvah*. We must dance and be jovial, without pause (of course, finding time for learning – because without Torah, there is no cause for dancing). It is a biblical imperative to “rejoice before Hashem, your G-d, for seven days.”³ There is no similar commandment on Pesach or Shavuos. The Torah instructs us to be merry and dance - non-stop, for seven days. We must know that our joy and dancing create tremendous corrections. We do not know what judgments may be awaiting us in the coming year, G-d forbid. We are granted twelve days from Yom Kippur through Simchas Torah to sweeten the judgments. Until Yom Kippur we were sealing, concluding – now we begin to build. With the measure that one dances and sings in these days – he builds the new year. Via dance, song and revelry – sins are forgiven. They create the new year.

Yom Kippur night, we declared, “A light is sown for the righteous, and for the upright of heart, joy.”⁴ We set our hearts upright with our *teshuva* of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – now it is time for joy.

In the Shadow of *Emuna*

We sit in the Sukkah and inhale *emuna*. The Zohar refers to the Sukkah as the “Shadow of *Emuna*.” The Sukkah is a reminder of the Clouds of Glory that Hashem encircled us with when we left Egypt. They protected us from the heat and the cold, leveling mountains, removing thorns, killing snakes and scorpions, illuminating the darkness.

The holiday of Succos symbolizes *emuna* in HKB”H and the absolute *bitachon* in His salvation. Just as the Clouds of Glory shielded us from all pain, so too, the Sukkah embodies the fact that we are sheltered in the shade of the Creator and have *bitachon* in Him. We grasp the *lulav* and shake it in every direction – hinting

³ ושמתם לפני ד' אלקיכם שבעת ימים (ויקרא כג, מ)
⁴ אור זרע לצדיק ולישרי לב שמחה (תהלים צז, יא)

that HKB”H rules everywhere. Throughout life, a Jew must instill the *emuna* that everything that occurs to him is from Hashem – to the point that we bless over the seemingly negative events exactly as we do over the positive events - a very elevated level of *emuna*. Even if I am leaving *shul* one morning feeling good about my *Shachris* and a motorcycle comes by and two hoodlums swipe my briefcase containing my *tallis* and *tefillin* and other valuables and I chase after them screaming, to no avail – even that is for the best. *Emuna* is until the very end!

When a person fortifies his *emuna* that Hashem orchestrates everything, that He instigates all of the causes – he does not blame himself or agonize over what has already transpired. Chazal say that “the wicked are full of regrets.” They constantly bemoan and second-guess – “if only I had done it this way everything would have been much better and I would not be where I am right now, in the mire that I find myself.” We are Jews with *emuna* and we know that if this is how events unfolded – it is Heaven’s will. They stole your briefcase? Think about what sweetening of judgment is in that event. If we are prepared to delve more deeply – we can ask Hashem to show us what sin we committed to deserve this anguish, for there is no suffering absent sin. If we still cannot determine why, we can perform *teshuva* for our thoughts, especially egotistical ones. Before crisis there is conceit. Before something is broken, stolen or ruined – there was some arrogance, some haughtiness for how successful we have been. Self-nullification and humility are more core, deep and true – everything is an underserved gift, without any merit on our part – it is all kindness and compassion from the Creator of the World.

Everyone experiences their misfortunes in this world. These hits are relentless - no one manages to elude them. If we could avoid them, we would remain stuck. We would be unable to receive any light. We must embrace the setbacks that we endure. We must welcome the stick that beats us, all of our troubles – because they indicate that we being handled by HKB”H. The misfortunes that we receive are not mistakes,

errors, bad luck – they set us on the exact trajectory that we must follow. Troubles and suffering are part of the public domain, affecting everyone. It is impossible to recognize or draw near to Hashem without them. If there are no cries – there can be no songs.

We must turn to Hashem - not only to request that we succeed, that all proceed well, that our children excel, etc. “Help us understand what You are telling us. Help us to read the correct map. Help us see You in every place. Help us feel that we are nothing and You are everything.”

When a person loses his temper – what is he really saying? “I am here” - the pinnacle of ego. When we get angry, our spirits depart and we cannot function until we calm down. Then, we begin to ponder – why did this happen to us, what does Hashem want of us, and we begin to judge our spouse, children, neighbors and ourselves favorably. Slowly, we return to ourselves and regain our composure.⁵

Who can comfort us in our grief? Who can help us? Only Hashem - only closeness to Hashem can console a person. When a person flees to Hashem and seeks comfort – he requires nothing more because it is already good for him, he is with Hashem.

If someone does something to us, hurts us, steals from us – we must run to Hashem. We must lower our heads and ask for forgiveness. “But You are righteous in all that has come upon us, for You have acted truthfully while we have caused wickedness.”⁶ We must entreat Hashem to encourage us, strengthen us, gladden us.

The Zohar says that whoever sits in the Sukkah, eats in the Sukkah, sleeps in the Sukkah and breathes the holy air of the Sukkah imbues the clarity of *emuna* in his heart to the point that it becomes his way of life.

⁵ באור פני מלך חיים

⁶ ואתה צדיק על כל הבה עלינו, כי אמת עשית ואנחנו הרשעו (נחמיה ט, לג)

Hashem’s Kingdom is not limited to the higher worlds, where we were earlier this month. The apex of our bond with Hashem is reached precisely now, with all of these matters that appear to be superficial. The G-dly light is revealed at all levels, not only in *shul* during times of *tefilla*, fasting, screaming and *shofar*. The G-dly light descends to us in our reality – where we eat, drink and are merry. Therefore, immediately after the holy day of Yom Kippur, we are commanded to erect a Sukkah.

During the seven days of the festival we learn that, in reality, there are many Sukkahs readied for us throughout the year. The unique attachment that we have during these days directs us to seek additional Sukkahs, where we can connect and experience Hashem. Every word of prayer is a Sukkah, every minute of *hisbodedus* is a Sukkah, every lifting up of our heads is a Sukkah. This entire holiday advises us of the fundamental idea that our bond with Hashem is such that we can experience it in all circumstances and at all times.

We must incessantly remind ourselves that Hashem protects us and walks with us, shading us exactly like the Sukkah. We must infuse the light of the Sukkah into our entire lives.

Soldiers in the Army of Hashem

After the long battle that we waged with the forces of evil through Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – we emerge as victors, with our weapons still in hand – the four species that look like armaments. If we won, why do we not lay them down? Rebbe Nossan answers that only one who constantly holds his weapon, despite anything that occurs – is truly victorious.

A Jew must constantly engage, never resting on his laurels. Action and struggle do not contradict *emuna* – they derive from it. A Jew’s life is constant Torah, *tefilla*, charity and acts of kindness.

פרשת וזאת הברכה

When Moshe Rabbeinu was told that his time had come, he insisted on a chance to bless the Jewish people first. His whole life he rebuked and warned them to follow the ways of Hashem and keep the *mitzvos* – he could not leave the world without blessing them first.

Moshe is called “the man of G-d”⁷:
When he was cast into the river – he was man;
When he turned it into blood – he was G-d-like;
When he fled from Pharaoh – he was man;
When he sank the Egyptians – he was G-d-like;
When he ascended to Heaven – he was man;
When he descended – he was G-d-like.

A *tzaddik* is a man of G-d – half man, half G-d-like.

The *tzaddik's* light is the light of loving other Jews. They see the good in Jews, even when their actions are not good. They see their good heart, their good desires. Love of Jews is intertwined with love of Hashem – we are all part of Hashem, every one of us.

We must look at each other and perceive Hashem. We must reveal HKB”H with our “good morning,” our encouraging smile, a pat on the back, every positive word, every expression of love, every display of honor towards another.

We must connect to others, to draw them close, to pray for them, to feel their pain. If another suffers, we must suffer with them – we must pray for their salvation as if it were our own. When we exhibit unconditional love – we can experience Hashem's Presence.

תפילה

Master of the World! When I invite the *Ushpizin* to the Sukkah, help me be sincere – help me truly feel them entering and staying with us for Yom Tov, especially the guest of that day. Let my invitation not just be in response to my wife's reminder to invite them. When I sit and raise my head to the *schach*, help me fully experience the holy *Shechina*.

Master of the World! Help me, throughout this holiday, to free myself and dance with abandon, even if I am not such an able dancer like those who entertain everyone with their talented footwork – help me dance for Your honor and not care about what I look like, even if there are those who smile and laugh at my moves – the main goal is to dance and leap about for Your honor – for, it is said that the more that one dances on Succos, the more Torah he merits. And, You, Father, know how badly I desire Torah and how difficult it is for me.

Master of the World! Help me to want for everyone. Whatever I request for myself – I should remember all those who also need it. I wish to be like those who, after every appeal that they make, always say “amongst the rest of the Jewish people.” I used to think that they did so to increase their chances of salvation – but why shouldn't I think that they sincerely care about every Jew?

Master of the World! Help me *daven*, even briefly, over every trouble that I see another Jew suffer, even if I don't even know him. Help me feel the pain of others - that it hurt me, that I try to imagine how I would feel if I was in his place, G-d forbid. Do not allow me to be indifferent or, even worse, to experience relief that it was not me. When another Jew is happy because of some success, help me be wholeheartedly happy for him, without any jealousy – and even ask of You, Father, to continue his success and joy.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos & Yom Tov,

Dov

Notice: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha'Emuna*, disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai *Shlita* and is not a complete or exact adaptation of *Ohr Ha'Emuna* and is not necessarily even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented therein. *Ohr Ha'Emuna* is published in Hebrew; in translation, accuracy is always compromised. Rav Azolai has not reviewed this material - any inaccuracies, omissions or confusion should be attributed exclusively to me. I still hope you enjoy and it provides some *chizuk*. Thank you Mordi Blass for your help with some of the Hebrew expressions.

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