

# Vechol Maaminim

A Weekly Leaflet From "Bnei Emunim"



## SUCCOS

### IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Divrei Torah About Amen and Tefillah in the Parashah

#### Succos: Teshuvah from Love

The meaning of the word "rishon" in the *passuk* (Vayikra 23:40): "*Ulekachtem lachem bayom harishon pri eitz hadar kapos temarim v'anaf eitz avos v'arvei nachal*," is explained by Chazal (Tanchuma Emor 22): "*Rishon l'cheshbon avonos*," and many wonder what this means.

Harav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev explains as follows:

On Yom Kippur we do *teshuvah mi'yirah*, out of fear of the Day of Judgment, but on Succos, as we perform the *mitzvos* of the festival with love and joy, we find ourselves returning to Hashem out of love. Chazal say (Yoma 86b) that when one repents from love his sins are transformed into merits. Therefore, the first day of Succos is called "*rishon l'cheshbon avonos*," because from this day on, the sins of the past start being counted as merits.

Based on this concept, the Minchas Yitzchak explained the words we say in *Mussaf* of *Shalosh Regalim*: "*Umipnei chata'einu galinu mei'artzeinu*," and the question arises why we are mentioning sin on Yom Tov? However, based on the above, it is easier to understand: Because everyone repents with love that is brought about by the joy of Yom Tov, and the sins are turned to merits, therefore, they can be mentioned on Zman Simchaseinu.

Kedushas Levi, Haazinu, Kovetz Kol HaTorah 42, p. 31

#### On the Yom Tov We Are Judged Regarding Water

The days of Succos are joyous ones, but they are also days of judgment, because it is then that we are judged with regard to water. The four *minim* also are a placation for the request for water (*Rosh Hashanah*, 16a; *Taanis* 2b). The *sefer Maggid Meisharim* (Emor) brings this story:

During Succos, the Bais Yosef built a big sukkah at the *tziyun* of Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai and his son Rabi Elazar, in which he spent the entire *chag*. When reciting *Hoshanos*, the Bais Yosef circled the *tziyun* of Rabi Elazar with the four *minim* in his hand; immediately, the skies clouded and rain began to fall.

The Bais Yosef was distraught because Chazal (*Sukkah* 28b) compared rain on Succos to a servant that comes to pour a cup for his *rebbe*

and his *rebbe* then spills the jug on his face. But the "Maggid" calmed him by saying that these rains were the result of his circling the holy *tziyun* with the four *minim*, and if he would have circled the *tziyun* one more time, it would have rained the way it did during the days of Choni Hame'agel.

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By way of *remez* it can be noted that "*mayim*" (with the *kollel*) is numerically equivalent to "amen". This hints to us that the rains come in the merit of responding amen, as Chazal say (*Taanis* 8a): "The rains only fall for those who are *baalei amanah* (people of faith)." A further allusion is that amen is an acronym for "*nasati matar artzechem*."

Emunas Yitzchak Vol. II, p. 119

#### Salvation in the Merit of Amen

"*Hosha na lemaancha Elokeinu hosha na*"

The acronym of "*hosha na lemaancha Elokeinu hosha*" is numerically equivalent to 91, which is equal of the value of the Holy Names, Havayah and Adnus, and of amen.

This hints to the words of Chazal (*Tikkunei Zohar* 40 1) that one who replies amen with all his might has his *tefillos* heard and his decree of 70 years is torn up. As it says (*Yeshayahu* 58:9) "*Az tikra v'Hashem ya'aneh*" – az is numerically equivalent to eight, to teach us that in the merit of the eight letters that make up the two Holy Names mentioned, which are the *sod* of amen, a person merits to have his *tefillos* accepted.

Lahavos Eish, p. 284

#### Awesome Tikkunim with the Naanuim

The *Yesod Veshoreh Ha'avodah* (*Shaar Ha'esis* 14) writes very lofty things about the greatness of the *naanuim* on Succos:

"The Arizal writes very awesome and powerful *kavanos* in his *naanuim*, and not every person can comprehend it. But you, who is a simple person like me [the Baal Yesod Veshoreh Ha'avodah], should have one basic, necessary *kavanah* and that is each time he moves the *lulav* out and then back in, he should concentrate: '*L'shem yichud Kudscha Brich Hu*...' to bring *nachas ruach* to my

Creator..." If a person has this intention with great joy, Hashem will consider it as though he had all the *kavanos* that the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah intended."

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Harav Yechezkel Abramsky told someone who came to him:

"I'll tell you a simple *kavanah* that you can have during *naanuim*: When you wave the *lulav* to the east, thank Hashem for the *chassadim* and influences that He bestowed upon you from the east; when you wave towards the north, thank for the *chassadim* from the north, and likewise for each of the directions. Because when a person recognizes the *chassadim* of Hashem and thanks for them, he brings *brachah* and salvation upon the world. Therefore, Chazal said (*Sukkah* 37b) that the *naanuim* stop bad spirits and winds."

Peninei Rabbeinu Yechezkel, Vol. II, p. 56

#### Sukkah and Amen

It is known that the sukkah symbolizes *emunah*, and as it is called in the *Zohar HaKadosh* (*Tetzaveh* 186 2): "*tzila d'meheimnusa*," because the fact that a Jew leaves his regular home and moves into a temporary dwelling as per the command of his Creator, proves his faith and *bitachon* in the Master of the World.

The Mashgiach, Harav Chaim Friedlander, explained this well (*Sifsei Chaim, Moadim* I, p. 333): "There is no fortress in the world that can compete with the strength of the sukkah, because the significance of sukkah is *emunah*, and when a person believes in Hashem with full *emunah*, he is literally under the Wings of the Shechinah."

The Chessed L'Avraham (*Succos* 34) brings a beautiful *remez* about the connection between sukkah and *emunah*: the word "sukkah" is numerically equivalent to 91, which is the value of amen, to teach us that just like replying amen symbolizes *emunah*, so, too, the mitzvah of sukkah symbolizes *emunah*.

Great *tzaddikim*, such as Harav Naftali of Ropschitz and the Divrei Chaim of Sanz, were known to light 91 candles in their sukkah. The Divrei Yoel of Satmar instructed that 91 electric bulbs be hung in his sukkah to hint that the number 91 symbolizes the deep significance of the festival.

Pri Hakerem p. 3; Machzor Divrei Yoel, Minhagei Kodosh 3

## miyamaK veL ahceL mihcfohS minumE henaat

The essence of Succos is "*emunah*", and so is the essence of replying amen. Chazal said (*Midrash Tehillim* 31:10) "*Emunim notzer Hashem*," (*Tehillim* 31:22) – refers to Yisrael who answer amen with *emunah*.

Succos is a time when we bask in the *tzila d'meheimnusa*. It is a time to strengthen our reply of amen with *emunah* and *kavanah* and we will thus merit that Hashem will spread the Sukkas Shalom over us – the *sukkah* of compassion and life and peace.





## Ana Hashem Hoshia Na

Each day of Succos, after reciting *Hallel*, we walk around the *bimah* with the *Sefer Torah* on it with the four minim in hand, as we recite the *Hoshanos*. In this segment, we will try to find the source and reason for this early custom, and to detail some of its *segulos*.

## Circling the Mizbeach—In Our Day, the Sefer Torah

The source of the custom of reciting *Hoshanos* is very ancient, and is already cited in the *Mishnah* in *Maseches Sukkah* (4:5) as already extant in the times of the Bais HaMikdash: "Every day they would circle the *mizbeach* once and say: *Ana Hashem hoshia na, ana Hashem hatzlichah na*. Rabi Yehudah omer *ani vaho hoshia na*."

We can learn about how the *minhag* further evolved since the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash from the words of the *Midrash* (*Talkut Shimoni Tehillim* 703) on the *passuk* in *Tehillim*: (26:6): "*Erchatz benikayon kapai v'asovevah es mizbeachcha Hashem*."

"Each day they would surround the *mizbeach* once; what was the order? All of Yisrael, big and small, would take their *lulavim* in their right hands and their *esrogim* in their left hands and would circle once...in our time, the *chazzan* of the shul stands like an Angel of Heaven with a *Sefer Torah* in his arms and the nation circles him, like the *mizbeach*."

The Bach (660) explains why we circle the *Sefer Torah* to symbolize the *mizbeach*: "Because listening to the Torah atones for us like the *mizbeach*." The *Bikkurei Yaakov* (ibid 101) adds the words of Chazal (*Menachos* 31b) that reading the *parshiyos* of the *korbanos* in our time atones for us instead of the *mizbeach*.

The Mahara"m Schick further writes in his *drashos* (63) that by circling the *bimah* upon which the *Sefer Torah* rests we show that the Torah is the center of our lives, and it is from the Torah that we receive our lives, and all of our actions and movements revolve around the Torah.

## The Order of the Piyutim of Hoshanos

Throughout the generations, in an effort to eternally commemorate the Bais HaMikdash, parts of the ancient *sidrei tefillah* were added to the order of *Hoshanos* established by Chazal, including additional *piyutim* unique for each day. The objective of these *piyutim*, and their content, express the hope for Hashem's salvation through the Redemption.

The first mentions of the *piyutim* of *Hoshanos* customarily recited in our day are found in the *siddurim* of the Gaonim (Rav Amram Gaon, Rav Saadya Gaon and others). The *siddurim* of the Rishonim that followed them featured many more *piyutim* composed by giants of the generations. Most prominent among them was the renowned poet Rabi Elazar Hakalir, whose *piyutim* were included in the *siddurim* of our times.

If we peruse the order of these *piyutim*, we will notice that they are all in alphabetical order, and the beginning and end of each stanza repeats the request of "*hoshia na*" in memory of the request of "*hoshia na*" that our forebears said in the Bais HaMikdash.

The reason we reiterate the request of "*hoshia na*" at the beginning and end of each stanza is explained by Rav Yoel of Satmar, ז"ל: At the beginning we ask "*hoshia na*" before mentioning the merit (*l'manacha Elokeinu* etc.), like a poor person asking for salvation even though he has no merits for it. But even after we rose to a higher level by mentioning the *zechuyos*, we need the request of "*hoshia na*" as the Baal Ha'akeidah says (*Nitzavim*) when a person's level rises, the claims against him are greater and he once again needs a *yeshuah* in order to merit to rise higher until he reaches the highest level. (*Divrei Yoel, Hoshana Rabba*, 1)

## Reciting Hoshanos—a Time of Joy

Despite our plea for a *yeshuah* during the *piyutim*, and the ruling of *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 576, 12) that one should not make personal requests on Shabbos and Yom Tov, the *piyutim* of *Hoshanos* are different because their essence is joy. The *Targum Shani* on *Megillas Esther* (3:8) praises of Am Yisrael that while they circle the *bimah* and say *hoshia na* they are rejoicing and dancing.

Likewise, the Gr"a cites *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 660:2) and as proof for the custom of *Hoshanos* he notes that the Torah linked the commandment of "*Velakachtem lachem pri eit hadar* (*Vayikra* 23:40)" to the commandment of "*Vesamachtem lifnei Hashem Elokeichem*." The Gr"a writes that therefore it was customary that an *avel*, a mourner, did not circle the *bimah* during *Hoshanos*, because the essence is joy.

The depth of the connection between the time of *simchah* and a time of request can be understood according to the Sfas Emes of Ger (Succos 5639): "Chazal established that we recite *Hoshanos* during these days...because they are called days of *yeshuah*...and during a time of redemption and salvation we must increase our pleas to be redeemed a permanent salvation."

## Segulos of the Hakafos of Hoshia Na

Gedolei Yisrael, notably the scholars of Kabbalah, attributed great importance to the time when *Hoshanos* is recited, and indicate that it is a holy time that is especially auspicious. As the *mekubal* Rabi Emmanu'el Chai Riki writes in his *sefer Mishnas Chassidim* (*Yemei Mitzvah* 2): "And in the *hakafah* each day we are saved from one minister [sar of a nation] that includes ten ministers from 70 nations."

Harav Yuzpa Segal, author of *Yosef Ometz*, said of himself (1048): "Why does one have to be strict and make the effort for the *hakafos* with the *lulav*...because the matter of *hakafah* is in memory of the circling of the *mizbeach*, therefore, it is very great and honorable... And that is why I made the effort with all my might to do the circling, even though the pressure and pushing was very hard for my weak nature, and blessed is He who saves and redeems...that nothing ever hurt me as a result of the *hakafos*..."

The author of *Aryeh Debei Ila'i* would daven in a room near the shul. Once, during the recital of *Hoshanos*, one of his young grandsons mustered up the courage and looked through the window at his *avodah*. He was stunned to see his holy grandfather lying on the ground his arms and legs splayed as he cried the *Hoshanos*, trembling with fear and awe of the holiness of the *Hoshanos*. (*Ari Shebachaburah* Vol. I, p. 67).

## So that All the Nations Should Know

We conclude the recitation of *Hoshanos* with the declaration: "*L'maan daas kol amei ha'aretz ki Hashem Hu Ha'Elokim ein od*." There are several explanations for why we do this:

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Os Chaim* 15) explains that because during the *hakafos* we express respect for the *arba minim*, the nations of the world may think that there is some other deity with power besides HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Therefore, as soon as we put down the *arba minim*, we quickly declare: "So that all the nations of the world should know that Hashem He is our G-d and no other."

Another explanation is offered by Harav Yirmiyahu Felsenburg, author of *Divrei Yirmiyahu* and a *talmid* of the Bais Halevi: According to what was cited above that with the power of *Hakafos* we subdue the ministers of the seventy nations, and therefore, right after that, we announce loudly: "So that the nations should know..." Because this goal is what we all strive for: that all the nations of the world should submit themselves before Hashem and recognize that there is no one besides Him. (*Otzar Minhagei Yeshurun*, 47:12)

## Open Miracle in the Interrogation Room

Yehoshua's reputation for his golden hands had spread far and wide. Over the many years that had passed since he had begun to ply his craft, he had constructed hundreds of beautiful pergolas, and his customer base grew steadily.

Yehoshua had set down a golden rule for himself: made he did not work on Friday at all, no matter what. This day was used to learn and to prepare for Shabbos with his family.

It was an unbreakable rule until that Friday around which this story evolved. That year had been very successful for Yehoshua. The In the forty days between Rosh Chodesh Elul and Yom Kippur he had built more than twenty strong, high quality pergolas. On the day after Yom Kippur, a Friday, he decided that he was done for the year.

But his plans did not quite meld with reality. Early in the morning, the phone rang, and he heard the pleading voice of an old friend, a wealthy, influential individual who had just finished building a new house:

"Yehoshua, I know you don't work on Friday, but at the last minute the contractor told me that he would not be able to assemble the pergola. I'll pay you double if you finish the job so I can sit in the sukkah in a few days."

Without knowing why, Yehoshua agreed. And thus, early on Friday morning, he could be found pounding his hammer and drilling the screws into the pergola. Slowly, the slats took on a form and by lunchtime, the beautiful pergola was complete.

As promised, Yehoshua received generous payment, and in addition, a potential new customer: a passerby had seen the work and announced his intentions to order a similar pergola. But all that did little to assuage Yehoshua's conscience, as he castigated himself for not withstanding the test and breaking his self-imposed rule... But a big surprise awaited him on Erev Succos. Again the phone rang, and it was that same "innocent passerby" who now identified himself as Ofer from the Tax Authority. Ofer informed him that he had to report for questioning at the Tax Authority offices right after Succos.

The call was like a thunderbolt on a clear day for Yehoshua. Throughout his years in business, he tried to report every job he did to the tax authorities. At the same time he knew that he would have trouble withstanding a close audit of the authorities because there were plenty of jobs that were not recorded as required, for example, that job he had just completed, and about which he was so ashamed.

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Distraught, Yehoshua tried to ask a few mavens who promised him that for a "nominal" fee they would take care of the problem one way or another, but he quickly learned that their promises were worthless.

The day of the interrogation was drawing near, and Yehoshua's blood pressure was rising. He tried every possible way to get out of the mess, but it seemed that nothing would work and he would fall like a ripe fruit into the hands of the experienced auditors. And who knew what his punishment would be...

On the appointed morning, Yehoshua had trouble focusing on his davening. His mind was abuzz with the names of the various *askanim* he had spoken to over the past days, most of whom

had already despaired. But there were still three who promised to do everything they could, for fair payment of course, and Yehoshua was still hoping...

Suddenly Yehoshua shook off his thoughts and remembered before Whom he was standing. The thought struck him: Why do I need agents when Hashem Himself is ready and waiting to listen to me?! At that moment, the *tefillah* burst forth from his heart:

"Ribbono shel Olam, I made a mistake when I took on work on Friday and I ask Your forgiveness for that. I also made a mistake by not trying to keep my accounts properly. But You know that when it comes to my actions before You, I was careful to be absolutely honest. Each month, I took *maaser* and used the money for *tzedakah* and *chesed*. I gave most of my money to be able to have children and sons-in-law *talmidei chachamim*. I ask of You Hashem to stand beside me this time and save me from the threat that hovers over me."

As soon as he finished his short *tefillah*, Yehoshua suddenly felt calm and confident. The simple words had infused him with strength and he davened *Shacharis* with *kavanah* and renewed faith in Hashem.

He was so confident that right after davening he called those last few *askanim* who he was depending on and told them to desist in their efforts on his file and added: "I'll pay you for any work you did already, I'm already taken care of..."

They could not believe him, but he insisted that he was taken care of, and with a sure heart, he drove towards the tax authority offices.

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The grey dismal walls greeted him severely. His heart sank when he was directed straight to the manager's office.

With his heart pounding, he took a seat across from the scowling official. The barrage of questions that the manager hurled at him proved that he was very proficient in the case:

"Why don't you have a receipt for the work that you carried out on this day, and why didn't you report on that job...?" the man demanded severely. Yehoshua sat silently, his heart directed heavenward in prayer.

Yehoshua waited for the punishment, but suddenly, the man's voice softened and he said:

"Believe me that I can prosecute you for even half of the violations in your file, but there's something about your case that tells me to back off. I have no explanation for this feeling."

"Still, I will be writing my conclusions down and putting them in your file, and take into account that if it will be opened again, you may be in big trouble. You can go home now, and make sure to report everything properly, because as I said, nothing is being erased..."

Thus, totally inexplicably, the strange encounter came to an end, and Yehoshua walked silently out of the room, a free man. His heart felt as if it would burst in gratitude to Hashem for hearing his *tefillah* and saving him in a most remarkable way.

Umasok Ha'or Chag Hasuccos