LeKavod Shabbos

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Dedicated in memory of Aviva Shoshana Bas Avrahom Avinu ע״ה

Hashem's Perfect Timing By Rabbi Moshe Hirschberg

Shortly after Purim, Rabbi Yeshaya Stroh, Rosh Yeshiva of Kollel Zichron Eliyahu, spent Shabbos in Baltimore at Kehilas Bnei Yeshiva, where he had been invited to speak, marking their relationship with the Adopt-A-Kollel program. During Shabbos, he learned that the shul was holding a raffle to raise funds for its building campaign. Wanting to express his hakaras hatov to the kehillah, he decided to purchase a ticket. One of the gabbaim encouraged him to dedicate it on behalf of the kollel, and Rabbi Stroh agreed. The raffle was unusual. There were only 360 tickets, each assigned a number between 1 and 360. That number also determined the ticket's price, but participants would not know the amount until after entering their payment information. Rabbi Stroh decided that if the ticket was

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inexpensive, he would pay for it himself. If it was one of the higher numbers, the kollel would reimburse him, since the purchase was really on the kollel's behalf. The wheel spun and landed on 326. It was far more than he had expected, so he decided the kollel would cover the cost. Two weeks later, just three days before Pesach, he awoke to an excited message: "Amazing news. Contact us as soon as possible." Rabbi Stroh had won the Rolex watch! His excitement quickly gave way to a halachic question. Since he had already decided that the kollel would pay for the ticket, did the watch belong to him or to the kollel? At the same time, his daughter had become engaged only a week earlier, and the family was beginning to face the significant expenses of making a wedding. Perhaps, he wondered, this was Hashem's way of providing some of the necessary funding? Rather than decide on his own, Rabbi Stroh asked his rav. The answer was immediate. "Since you intended that the kollel would pay for the ticket, the watch belongs to the kollel." On his way home, Rabbi Stroh bought cheesecake and gathered his wife and daughters around the table. This is what he shared: "No one knows that I intended for the kollel to pay for the ticket. Had I kept the watch, no one would ever have questioned me. But Hashem knows. The rav ruled that the watch belongs to the kollel, so that's exactly what we'll do. "And as for the wedding," he added, "Hashem will send us what we need when we need it." True to his word, Rabbi Stroh gave the kollel the watch, which was subsequently sold for its full value of $16,000 that went to benefit the kollel. But that wasn't the last of Rabbi Stroh's

relationship with the watch. Within half an hour of that meeting with his family, one of his daughters called him with astonishing news. Months earlier, Rabbi Stroh's wife had applied for compensation from the Israeli government for lost income because of the school closures during the war with Iran. She had initially received only a small payment and had appealed, explaining that June was the busiest month of her working year. The appeal appeared to have gone nowhere. When she later followed up, she was told that the program had already closed and there was nothing more that could be done. Now, completely unexpectedly, the tax authority had reopened her file, agreed that she had been underpaid, and informed her that 6,500 shekels were being deposited into their account. The timing was perfect. That very day, they needed to pay the deposit for their daughter's wedding hall. Rabbi Stroh had been planning to put it on his credit card and hoped the money would come later. Instead, Hashem sent it exactly when it was needed. His daughter then shared a beautiful thought. "A Rolex is prized because every second is perfectly precise. If someone buys a Rolex only to set it three minutes fast, they might as well buy an inexpensive watch. Hashem runs the world with that same precision. He does not send us what we need too early or too late. Everything arrives at exactly the right moment." The story spread after Pesach, inspiring people around the world. Not long afterward, while Rabbi Stroh was in New York raising funds for the kollel, a friend called. "My wife and I heard your story," he said. "We were so inspired by your honesty that we would like to help with your

daughter's wedding. "The Rolex is worth about $16,000. Since you already received approximately $2,000 from the government, we'd like to contribute the remaining $14,000." So, in the end, Rabbi Stroh's family received the very same amount of the watch toward the chasunah. By choosing complete integrity, no one lost. The kollel received what rightfully belonged to it, and Hashem provided everything the family needed—in His perfect time. As Chazal teach, a person never loses by doing what is right. *Zichru Toras Moshe*

The Guest Who Wore All White **By Tuvia Litzman**

A Jewish woman in Jerusalem who was not blessed with children after many years of marriage, felt more and more distressed with each passing year. She visited many righteous people and prominent rabbis and asked them to bless her, but she remained childless. One day, a woman acquaintance gave her a strong recommendation: many women in a similar situation had received the gift of children after praying at the tomb of our matriarch "Mama Rachel" in Beit Lechem ("Bethlehem'). The childless woman decided to take upon herself to say the whole book of Tehillim (Psalms) once a week at the gravesite of "Mama Rachel". She fulfilled her commitment, and to her immense delight she became pregnant and later that year gave birth to a baby boy. This became cause for pure joy and excitement for all her family and friends and neighbors, since she had been married for twenty years until this first child. The new mother knew in her heart that he was born in the merit of our Matriarch Rachel, and she felt strongly that she wanted to give "Mama

Rachel" a personal invitation to the brit mila (circumcision ceremony). She wrote a nice invitation, put it into a white envelope and made a special trip to Beit Lechem in order to place the invitation on "Mama Rachel's" tomb. When she approached the tomb, she saw that a large number of Israeli soldiers were positioned around the building. The soldiers explained to the woman that riots were going on and the Arabs were throwing rocks at anyone who attempted to approach. They refused to allow her to go inside, not even for the brief two minutes she was begging them for. They kept repeating that it was too dangerous. She, however, refused to give up. She approached a small group of the Palestinian policemen and in Arabic explained the reason for her visit. She pleaded with them to let her go inside. They appreciated her plea, the highest ranking one gave an order, and four armed Arab policemen escorted her into the building over the grave. She put the envelope on the tomb, expressed a few words of warm gratitude, said a few chapters of Tehillim and left the place, again escorted by the policemen, whom she thanked. A large number of people came to the circumcision - relatives and friends, and others as well who had heard about the 'miracle' birth after twenty years. Everyone wanted to participate in the exalted joy of the special occasion. One close friend even arranged for a video photographer to film the event. A few minutes before bringing the boy into the Covenant of Abraham, a beautiful, refined-looking woman entered the hall. She wore a long white dress and made such a strong impression that many women stood up and pressed her hand, despite the fact that they had no idea who she was. The woman approached the mother of the boy, embraced her, kissed her on her cheeks and wished her 'Mazal

Tov'. The brit was performed and everybody felt the exceptionally great joy. After a few days the family received the video film of the brit, and a CD in order to watch the movie on their computer. As they stared at the screen, they saw something very strange: one of the women got up from her seat, smiled, and pressed her hand - into thin air! After that, another woman got up and pressed her hand in the air. This happened a few times, always with a different woman. Then, they saw how the mother of the boy made a motion as if embracing somebody and offering her cheeks for a kiss - but without seeing any person doing it! They watched the movie over and over again with the same strange events repeating themselves. Finally they realized that the video camera simply did not catch the beautiful woman dressed in her white frock. According to Jewish custom, if you are personally invited to a brit mila, it is such an important occasion that you have to come…. *Reprinted from Chassidic Gems II*

Succot **By Rabbi Tuvia Bolton**

This holiday is named after the commandment of living (or at least eating all meals) in a 'Succa' (a hut with only branches and leaves for a roof) for seven days beginning the fifteenth of Tishre. Like all the Jewish holidays and commandments, Succot and the Succa are done on a certain date that a miracle occurred. For example; Pesach is the date the Jews left Egypt, Shavuot; when we received the Ten Commandments, Rosh HaShanna; when man was created, Purim; when we were saved from Haman etc. The only exception is Succot. Succot is the only Jewish holiday that does not commemorate a date upon which a miracle occurred.

Rather it reminds us that for the entire forty years the Jews were in the desert G-d protected them with clouds of 'glory'. The Rabbis have explanations why G-d wants us to celebrate when we do but all agree that no special miracle happened on the date we celebrate it; the fifteenth of Tishre. Why is Succot different? Here is another strange fact; Chabad Chassidim do not sleep in the Succa; they claim it makes them spiritually 'uncomfortable'. Although according to the Shulchan Aurach, (Aurach Chiam 640:4) it is permissible for one who is uncomfortable to refrain from sleeping in the Succa but usually Chabad Chassidim are renowned for their self-sacrifice and disregard for discomfort when it comes to doing commandments. For instance they eat all their meals in the Succa even when itâ€™s pouring rain and they are exempt from doing so. Even the Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt”l) himself, while he was living in Paris (before he was Rebbe during the years 1933-1940) just after the German conquest, actually risked his life a few days for Succot. He traveled alone through the war zones and over dangerous borders to Italy to buy an etrog (a citrus fruit used in the 'Mitzva' of 'shaking the Lulov') because there was none in Paris that fit his qualifications. Why, then, when it comes to sleeping in the Succa, is Chabad different? Here is a story that will help to explain. The Lubavitcher Rebbe rarely left Crown Heights. In fact he seldom left his headquarters in 770 Eastern Parkway. But it so happened that once the Rebbe had some problems with his eyes that required a check-up. A doctor, who happened to be a religious Jew, was contacted

and a special appointment was made after working hours for the Rebbe to visit his office. The examination required that the doctor put drops in the Rebbe's eyes and, because the drops took several minutes to begin their effect and the Rebbe had to sit and wait, the doctor sensed that it was a golden opportunity to ask the Rebbe a question that had been bothering him. The Rebbe agreed and the Doctor asked. "Rebbe, I've traveled around the entire world and everywhere I go I see Chabad houses and Chabad representatives working day and night helping Jews. "I mean, their dedication is really amazing. They live in the worst conditions, have great difficulty getting Kosher food or teachers for their children or a million other things that religious Jews need, and sometimes they even endanger their and their family's lives, I mean they live in some places of the world that are not always Jew friendly. "So my question is; if they are doing so much then why hasn't Moshiach arrived yet? Why hasn't he come? The Rebbe looked up at the doctor very seriously, hesitated several seconds and answered. "I have the exact same question and it doesn't allow me to rest. "But one thing I can tell you" the Rebbe continued, "is that I don't let the Chassidim rest either. I don't let them sleep at nights" The next story is about an ex-basketball manager who became a 'baal tshuva'; a religious Jew because of the Rebbe. The story is a long and interesting one but one episode is very relevant to us. The Rebbe took a special liking to him and once told him that he should get more sleep. "But Rebbe," he replied "You also don't sleep very much. Look at how black your eyes are. Why do you worry about me? You

should worry about your own health." The Rebbe looked at him and smiled “My job is to worry for all the Jews in the world, and that keeps me awake nights. But your job is to listen to me and get more sleep.” From these two stories we can learn something about sleeping. It’s not very productive. But if it’s so negative then why did G-d make sleep necessary? The Rebbe once asked this question in one of his discourses and explained that the reason sleep is good is because we wake up. And without the change we experience by waking man would never imagine that drastic change of awareness is possible. But now, after we wake from sleep, we can understand that perhaps we can wake up again from our normal awareness to an awareness of the Creator. And this is exactly the topic of the Succa; as the sentence says Sit in Succa seven days so you should KNOW etc.' (Lev. 23:42-43) In other words the purpose of sitting in the Succa is to know and be aware to the G-dliness that surrounds and permeates us. And with this knowledge will come world peace and prosperity. That is why the Succa, more than any other commandment, symbolizes the world peace and harmony that will reign in the Days of Moshiach. As Maimonides explains that Moshiach will bring about that 'The world will be filled with the KNOWLEDGE of G-d and peace.' (End of Laws of Kings) and this is especially stressed in the Holiday of Succot. In our prayers after each meal of Succot we request G-d to rebuild the fallen SUCCA of Dovid" (i.e. the Reign of Moshiach) Also Succot and Moshiach both deal uniquely with the gentiles: Moshiach will bring all the gentiles to abandon their various religions and worship

only their Creator (as we say thrice daily in 'Alenu'). And in the course of the seven days of Succot (in the days of the Temple) a total of Seventy oxen were sacrificed in order to bring blessing to the 'Seventy' nations of the world. And our reciting of those sacrifices now in the daily Succot prayers simulates that blessing. Similarly the HafTorah for the first day of Succot (Zacharia 14) tells us that in the days of Moshiach all the gentiles will come to Jerusalem to celebrate Succot. Also the holiday of Succot featured the 'Water drawing' ceremony which again refers to Moshiach when the G-dliness will fill the world like WATER. (See end of Rambam) So that answers our question; the reason Succot does not celebrate any particular date or miracle is because it, more than any other Jewish Holiday, commemorates the coming of Moshiach. And the arrival of Moshiach is supposed to occur any and every moment. And the reason Chabad doesn't sleep in the Succa (it seems to me) is that we have to be working every moment to make it happen one moment sooner. That the blessing of Succot should envelop the entire world. And, as we saw in the above stories, when trying to bring Moshiach there is so much work to do that there is no time to sleep. On the other hand, after Moshiach arrives there will be no NEED to sleep. The Good will be so great, awareness of truth will be so incomparable and people will have such a drive for G-dliness that there will be no need for sleep to teach us to change ourselves. So in any case, sleep and the Succa (at least as far as it symbolizes Moshiach) just don't go together. And because Chabad is so involved with the goal of bringing Moshiach

it is specifically THEY that don't sleep in the Succa. But the reason that Succot occurs when it does (after the High Holy Days) is because hopefully we will be so pure-minded after the intense prayers and soul searching of Rosh HaShanna and Yom Kippur that we will realize the awesome lesson this holiday is teaching us. May HaShem reveal His true peace upon the entire world, raise the fallen Succa of Dovid and give us all a Chag S'meach! And we can make it happen even one moment sooner! Even one more good deed, word or even thought can actually tip the scales and bring Moshiach NOW!!

The Sukkah That Brought an Entire Building Together **By Inbal Idan**

When the real estate agent showed me the apartment, he described it as peaceful, in a well-kept building with a great view and excellent exposure—and, above all, easygoing neighbors. I had been looking for an apartment in the area for a long time, but I didn’t know this building yet. Compared with the other buildings, it had relatively few residents, which was another major advantage for me. After my wife and I saw the apartment, we came away impressed. I even tried knocking on one or two neighbors’ doors. Unfortunately, no one answered. The building was quiet and well maintained, exactly as I had been told. Everything looked perfect. We signed the deal. A month later, we were fortunate enough to move in. I’m a very social person, and connecting with people is a core part of who I am, so on the very first day, I went around to the neighbors with boxes of chocolate and candy, offering treats to everyone. Almost all of them opened their doors with a bit of hesitation,

their eyes widening when I offered them something. I didn't really pay attention to their expressions. To me, it felt natural—I was new to the building, right? But those were the good days. Right afterward, the flood began. One of my children left his bicycle in the entrance. We had made it clear to the kids again and again that bikes should be locked outside, but he had rushed upstairs to grab something from the apartment, and just then a neighbor arrived. immediately came up to our home, furious. He gave an angry lecture about the bike being left there in such an unsafe manner, and then continued: If we intended to join forces with family X, he would make sure we understood who was in charge here. I honestly didn't understand him. There is no question that a bike left at the building entrance is a safety and sanitation problem, and it absolutely called for a conversation and clarification with my son. But I couldn't understand what it had to do with family X. There was no such family in the building. I gently asked what he meant. Eventually, I understood that it was a family that had moved away long ago. They were gone—but the resentment remained, and now I was supposed to fix it. I calmly explained that I didn't know what had happened with the former neighbor, but I did know that, it would not happen with me. I would speak with my son. He immediately stressed that we should be careful not to end up like them, because he was going to "make the direction clear right away," in his words. That was my introduction. Within two weeks, I understood that I had moved into a buzzing hive of anger, manipulation, and intrigue. It wasn't just that neighbor. Later, I learned from him that the son of the downstairs neighbors deliberately threw down his bike as part of their ongoing battle with one another. But

that was only the small story. Everything was wrapped in revenge, rivalries, and petty calculations. For a moment, I felt like I was inside palace corridors, surrounded by all the politics and schemes swirling there. It became a real burden. I'm not someone who can absorb things like that. I can't bear to hear, see, and understand that this is how people treat one another, no matter how right one person or another may be. Even before Rosh Hashanah, I tried to persuade people—maybe someone would soften, forgive, rise above it, and take responsibility for what was happening here. But there was no one to talk to. It was painful and unbelievable. My apartment didn't have a balcony suitable for a sukkah, and since we are observant, I now had a new problem: Where would I build the sukkah that year? I asked one of the neighbors, a religious man, where he built his sukkah. He sighed and told me that every year he traveled elsewhere to celebrate the holiday because here, there was no chance the neighbors would allow it. I was completely stunned. Was it really that bad? I wasn't discouraged, but at least I knew what to expect. I went knocking on neighbors' doors, asking whether I could build a sukkah at the building entrance, where there was a large enough open area that people could still pass through easily and the sukkah would not inconvenience anyone. I won't say it went smoothly, but aside from 2 neighbors who had trouble giving their consent, I managed to persuade everyone to agree. Of course, I promised that immediately after the holiday, I would take down the sukkah and leave no trace behind. The night after Yom Kippur, I began putting up the sukkah, as prescribed. With every nail, I prayed to Hashem to help me get through this holiday with great joy, because the whole situation in the building

and its sour atmosphere were very difficult for me. The neighbors came and went, and it seemed that they were even happy to see a lovely sukkah at their entrance. Then the religious neighbor arrived. He looked at the sukkah and was very surprised that I had received everyone's approval. I immediately told him he was welcome to celebrate the holiday with us. There was a big sukkah, and we love guests. "It'll be joyful," I promised him. "Give it a try." He smiled and thanked me but said he had already made plans with someone else. The next day, he came back, somewhat embarrassed, and asked whether it would be all right if he and his family came to our sukkah after all, because the place he was supposed to go had canceled for some reason. I jumped for joy and started dancing with him. Guests on a holiday—what a joy! He was so moved; he could see firsthand how much I wanted him close. On the eve of the holiday, I went up to all the neighbors, knocking door to door. First, I went to Mazal, a widowed neighbor and a kindhearted woman. She was very happy to see me and said she was excited to see a sukkah in the courtyard. She hadn't seen one in years; it truly took her back to her childhood and her parents' home. She had grown up in a home that observed Torah and mitzvot, and she had continued to observe as much as she could after getting married. Even today, she is careful about all the laws of kashrut, and her kitchen is strictly kosher, she noted excitedly. I told her that I was truly excited to invite her to join us for the holiday meals. She was a little embarrassed and said she hoped she would feel up to it. From there, I continued to the older neighbor—the one who had been angry about the bicycle. I invited him too, to come and be with us for the holiday. He smiled, appreciated the gesture, and

thanked me. There was no answer at the final two apartments. Holiday eve arrived. I made Kiddush over wine, happy and thrilled to see my family and the neighbors together. Before we went out to wash our hands, my wife noticed Mazal near the sukkah. She urged her to come in. It seemed Mazal was debating with herself about whether to enter; she was probably embarrassed. No one can say no to my wife. Mazal told her that she had cooked for the holiday and had large pots of food at home. We told her not to worry—we would bring everything down. I immediately went upstairs to her apartment with my sons. What I saw there... food of every kind, enough for an army battalion. Nothing like it. We brought it all down to the sukkah in several trips. She had set a table fit for a king. Everything was there. Mazal is blessed with talented hands, and her food was so delicious. She told us that for years she had longed to cook for a family. Sadly, she had never had the opportunity, and now, with the sukkah and the invitation, it all burst out of her. I was happy that we had been able to give her a family and a holiday atmosphere. We complimented her on the excellent food, and as we enjoyed ourselves and tried to figure out who could possibly finish these quantities, the older neighbor stood at the entrance, a little embarrassed, with a young man beside him. I immediately got up and shook his hand. “I came with my grandson, so he could see a sukkah for the first time in his life,” he said, half embarrassed. We immediately arranged chairs for them. They had no choice—they joined us. There was certainly no shortage of food. At first, I was worried and a little frightened. Here the neighbors were meeting in my sukkah, and perhaps emotions would erupt and get out of control. But Hashem heard my prayer

and brought peace among us. I decided to go over to the neighbors who had not opened their doors for me that afternoon. I thought: If I'm doing this, I'm doing it all the way. A student couple lived in one apartment. I told them about the sukkah & invited them to come down, even just for a few minutes. "There's excellent food," I promised. They said they would come down for a short visit. From there, I went to the last door, where a not-young couple from Eastern Europe lived. They didn't really understand what I wanted; a sukkah was not something they truly knew about. They looked at me strangely, but as you may have gathered by now, I'm not fazed by reactions like that. I kept talking and talking until they got tired of it and said they were coming down. I returned to the sukkah. Two minutes later, the students arrived and settled in. It wasn't long before I saw them emptying and refilling their plates. The older neighbors came down carrying a bouquet of flowers they apparently had at home. Everyone praised Mazal; perhaps for the first time, they discovered the chef they had in the building. It gave her so much—she blossomed and was happy. Everything she had prepared suddenly had such deep meaning. We began to sing, singing every style—Israeli folk songs, Mizrahi music, Israeli songs, and Hasidic songs, from every corner of the spectrum. The joy was indescribable. Time passed, and we were still singing. I shared a few brief words of Torah, focusing mainly on the essence of the days of Sukkot. I told them about Simchat Beit Hashoevah. For some of them, it was the first time they had ever heard of it. Then we went back to singing, because there is nothing like song to bring worlds closer and open gates. The meal ended close to midnight. We left the sukkah as though we had been torn

out of a magical world and brought back into present-day reality. I wondered whether any of this would help the overall atmosphere. After all, life goes on, & feelings follow laws beyond nature. After the holiday, I got my answer. The student couple came down with musical instruments, one carrying an oud and the other a clarinet. The European couple arrived with an accordion and a violin. They had agreed among themselves: Simchat Beit Hashoevah. I was stunned. They had joined together to surprise me. Naturally, everyone joined in again. This time, there was dancing & singing with musical instruments—a perfect symphony. What can I say? That year, I had ushpizin ila'in kedishin... *Hidabroot.com*

The Year We Built The Sukkah **By Perry Block**

Some kids nag their dad to get them a dog. Mine nagged me to build them a sukkah. Ever since my children were old enough to go to Hebrew School, each year they asked me if we could build a sukkah for Sukkot. As you know, a sukkah is a small dwelling place --- a sort of glorified hut --- that Jews construct & inhabit during Sukkot instead of their comfortable homes with heat, indoor plumbing, & television sets showing the World Series. All things considered, however, being pushed for a sukkah beats having your kids constantly nagging you about getting a dog. A sukkah doesn't have to be walked at 6:30 in the morning in February & very rarely messes on the hardwood flooring. And since I didn't grow up having a sukkah but did have a dog, the idea frankly kind of appealed to me as well. I am mechanically inclined – inclined to hire a mechanic that is. There was only problem. I am the type of Jewish

person who happens to be very mechanically inclined; that is, whenever any situation requiring fixing or repairing things arises, I am very inclined to hire a mechanic. It's the same with constructing things. I have been known to give up in disgust after attempting to put together a toy for children under 3 from McDonald's. So, I stonewalled. "Guys, if we have our own sukkah, you won't enjoy the neighbor's sukkah as much." This was true. Our neighbor, a Jewish man who owned an elaborate set of power tools, built a tree house for his children, & I believe spent Sundays instructing Amish people in the art of barn raising, annually built a killer sukkah. Large, sturdy, bedecked in gourds, pumpkins, & sumptuous decorations acquired by the family over years, the neighbors' sukkah lacked only water spewing fountains to make it a secondary tourist attraction in the Philadelphia area. Then our neighbor moved away to a house with larger property where he could presumably build an even more grandiose sukkah, & was replaced with a nice gentile family which spent appreciably less time each fall building a sukkah than turning their house each winter into Rockefeller Center. "Look, you guys," I said to the kids pressing harder for excuses, "we have kind of a smallish house & sometimes the roof leaks. That's just as good!" Finally, I relented. This year my son Brandon & I would build a sukkah. The only problem now was that Brandon is every bit as handyman challenged as I am. This is a young guy who looks about for a plug whenever he is required to use a screwdriver and operates a pair of pliers by blowing on them. So we sought out some kind of more or less ready-made sukkah. Knowing little, we checked the web. Although I had my heart set on a sukkah that said "just add water,"

all of them said "some assembly required." For Brandon & me, that usually means an assembly we both ought not to attend. Even more compelling, all said "some dollars required, “in most cases multiple hundreds. Our new neighbor, also quite handy, came to our rescue with multiple plywood boards and cinder blocks. The boards were somewhat daunting & featured wood knots the size of supernovas, but at least I was familiar with cinder blocks, their having served as more or less the sole decoration for my dorm room the first year of college. The some assembly required did include its share of modestly banged fingers, scraped shins, and "where's the plug for the hammer, Dad?" but we wedged the plywood between the cinder blocks, laid on the wooden top, and covered the whole thing with sheets that had long ago seen their better days. Gradually a hovel-like structure arose. We enlisted neighborhood children to make decorations, most of whom proved to be as artistically challenged as we were mechanically so. We added gourds and pumpkins, blessed the sukkah, & though some of our Jewish neighbors said it looked great "but when was it going to be finished?" we were ready to spend happy times there well in advance of the holiday. That is, well in advance of the rainy holiday. That year it rained the first 5 days of Sukkot, during which time we had to content ourselves with spending happy times admiring our handiwork getting drenched. By the time it dried out at the end of the holiday, we did enjoy a meal or two there. Sitting in the sukkah, gazing skyward, & chowing down on the traditional corned beef specials, french fries, & Coca-Cola from Murray's Delicatessen, I think we both felt a little bit proud of our achievement & maybe a little bit closer to our Jewish roots. Since then,

circumstances have intervened, and that was the last sukkah Brandon & I ever built. I'm still using the same excuse. "Y'know Bran," I say, "we live in kind of a smallish house & sometimes the roof leaks. That just as ..." No, it isn't just as good. *aish.com*

The Case of the Missing Etrog **By Chaya Shuchat**

It was the second day of Sukkot & my husband came home and cheerfully informed me that his lulav and etrog were nowhere to be found. He had given his set to a yeshiva student who was making rounds to hospitals and nursing homes, to give patients the opportunity to fulfill this important mitzvah. The young man, in turn, had passed in on to someone else who promised that he would personally return it. The chain broke down at that point but it was clear that someone had my husband's set of Four Species, and it was not him. Unfortunately, I was unable to digest this news with the same equanimity that my husband displayed. A lulav-and-etrog set is not cheap—somewhere between $100 & $200 for a nicely grown, plump, unblemished citron & a firm, straight-backed lulav branch. This is on top of all the additional holiday expenses—new clothing and shoes for all the children, festive meals nearly every night. Before I reacted, though, I recalled a story that I heard in childhood, of a poor rabbi who sold an heirloom set of tefillin, his only valuable possession, in order to afford a beautiful etrog. His wife was so incensed at what he had done that she grabbed the etrog and bit off its tip, rendering it unfit for a blessing. My sympathies at that moment were completely with the rebbetzin, and I probably would have done worse things to the etrog, had it been in my

possession. But our precious set of Four Species was currently in the hands of a well-meaning yeshiva student, who at the moment was trudging around Brooklyn to find Jews who had not managed to acquire their own set. This image calmed me down somewhat, at least enough to ask through clenched teeth: "And if you must lend out your lulav and etrog, why can't you at least buy a cheap set just for lending?" "And why," my husband inquired patiently, "should a Jew in the street make a blessing over a lulav and etrog less beautiful than the one I choose for myself?" I found it difficult to argue with his logic. People who spend over $100 on a set of fruit and branches will fall for a mystical argument anytime. I reminded myself of another childhood story, of a different rabbi (or maybe it was the same one?) who set out with the precious rubles he had hoarded all year, to purchase a truly outstanding set of Four Species. Along the way, he passed a poor coachman whose horse had just keeled over and died. The poor man was now left without any means of support. Without hesitation, the rabbi handed over the entire sum to the coachman to purchase a new horse. After all, he reasoned, blessing the Four Species is a mitzvah, and charity is a mitzvah, too. When everyone else in the synagogue blesses the Four Species, he will say his blessing over a horse. Applying the rabbi's logic to my own situation, on the cosmic mitzvah scale there really is no difference if my husband makes a blessing over his set, or if that same set is used by hundreds of other Jews on the streets of Brooklyn. Mitzvah = mitzvah, right? Especially since the mitzvah is compounded many times over, by all the

people using it. I remembered one year when my husband's etrog had been returned to him covered with brown splotches, testimony to the dozens of hands that had gripped it. I had looked distastefully at the bruised etrog, thinking of the many hours he had spent browsing the etrog market, trying to find the most perfect, unblemished fruit. But my husband had seen it differently: "All the hand-marks make the etrog more beautiful." Putting the missing-etrog saga into perspective, I couldn't be too angry. As the rabbi in the story had remarked to his etrog-chomping wife, family harmony is also a mitzvah, and if G d had seen fit to deprive them of one mitzvah there was no reason not to have the other. The rabbi kept his peace, and so did I. My husband mentally relinquished all claim to his lulav and etrog, and gifted it with a full heart to the student who had borrowed it. We made do with borrowed etrogim for the duration of the holiday, as my husband's set never was returned. I still wish he had found a more reliable agent, but mess-ups do happen. As we say in Yiddish, zol es zain a kapparah--"let it be an atonement," and let our forgiving attitude in this instance stand us in good stead the next time we inadvertently lose or damage someone else's property. I am writing this story nearly a year later. Looking back, I have to say that G d amply repaid us for the cost of the missing etrog. In fact, we were able to set aside enough money to easily meet all of this year's holiday expenses, including the most beautiful lulav and etrog that we can find. *Website of Chabad.Org*

Q&A with Rave Avigdor Miller זצ"ל - *Thanking While Shaking*

Q: What should we be thinking about when we're shaking the lulav and esrog?

A: Look, you can't just lean back and do the minimum. You can't just shake this way, shake that way, and finished. Let's say you're a frum person who keeps everything — everything! So, you bought a beautiful esrog, and you paid good money for it. Now you're holding your lulav and esrog. Is that enough? Maybe you should be mechadeish something in the mitzvah. You have to be a mechadeish. When you make the na'anuim, you should say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "I'm thanking You, Hashem, that You gave me a good heart." You know, many people have sick hearts. They wish they could have your heart! The medrash says that the esrog is like the heart. So, as you hold up the esrog you think, "Thank You, Hashem, for giving me a good solid healthy heart. And for giving me good eyes." Many people have trouble with their eyes. And that's what the hadassim are telling us. The hadassim are shaped like eyes. "You gave me a good backbone." Many people, nisht eingedacht, lo aleichem, are bent over. They have hunchbacks. Their spines are bent. And you have a straight back. Now, that's something to think about when you pick up the lulav. That's called being mechadeish in the mitzvah, putting more into it than the minimum. After all, what does na'anuim mean? Back & forth, back and forth. What's that meaning of all that back & forth? It means our thanks are to You, Hashem, because it came from You to us. Our thanks are to You because of what's always coming from You to us. That's what we're saying when we shake the Daled Minim back & forth. We shake in all directions because we say, no matter where the good comes from, it's coming only from You, constantly.

And therefore, you take the lulav, that's your backbone, your shidrah, & you take the esrog, which is your heart. And you take the hadassim, your eyes, & you take the aravos, which are your lips, your mouth, & you say, "I dedicate them to You, Hashem, for what You did for me." Back and forth, back & forth; that's what you think about by the na'anuim. We say to Hashem, "It all comes from You to me." You think it's silly? It's not silly at all! I'll tell you what I think about many times when I say na'anuim. Many times, I think like this: One of the na'anuim is for my oldest son-in-law. Baruch Hashem, I have a good eidim. Baruch Hashem! And baruch Hashem, I have a good 2nd son-in-law. Baruch Hashem, for the next eidim. Baruch Hashem, there's no trouble there. I never hear any machlokes. My daughters live in shalom with my eidims. Baruch Hashem, I'm happy. Such good eidims. That's why we make na'anuim. That's what it means. "I'm thanking You for what You've given to me." So, when you say tomorrow by the na'anuim, you should start thinking, הוֹדוּ לַהַשֵּׁם כִּי טוֹב — Thank Hashem, for He is good! You married off your daughters well? It wouldn't be a bad idea to make one of the na'anuim for this son-in-law. "Ay yah yay! I'm thanking You, Hashem, for this son-in-law.' And by the next na'anuim, הוֹדוּ לַהַשֵּׁם כִּי טוֹב, "I'm thanking You, Hashem, for the next son-in-law." That's the way to do it. It's such a very big thing to have married off your children well that you can never thank enough for a good son-in-law or a good daughter-in-law. And that's how you should think when you make the na'anuim. It shouldn't just be a mechanical thing. *(September 1989)*

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