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Miami	6:37	Toronto	6:20
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## Succos

# Succos

RABBI BERNIE FOX

**"You should dwell in Succot for seven days. Every member of the nation of Israel must dwell in Succot. This is so that your future generations will know that I caused Bnai Yisrael to dwell in**

*(continued on next page)*

## Succos

# Seeing Stars

RABBI HESHY ROTH

Written by a friend

I enjoyed yet another Shabbos evening at my dear friend Rabbi Roth. The Shabbos table is always filled with Torah discussions where he and his sons battle for Torah clarity.

This Shabbos, he asked a very basic, yet perplexing question: "We learn that the Schach (the roof of the Succah) must allow gaps so we might view the stars through it's covering. This is to assist us in witnessing God's stellar creations suspended in the heavens, and recall His majesty. We are to realize that God is essential to our shelter. Why then must a Succah's covering exist at all? Would we not see the stars all that much clearer, had no roof existed? What is the philosophy behind the Succah's partial covering, if in fact, any covering obscures what we might envision?"

Rabbi Roth went on to elaborate on the purpose of Succah: we are to leave our permanent homes, and dwell in the Succah – a minimal dwelling – so as to demonstrate our true dependency is on God, and not the physical protection provided by a sturdy roof. Doing so: gazing through the sparse Schach, helps us achieve this objective.

Why then have Schach at all?!

Rabbi Roth explained: God does not want man to live where he rejects God's natural world and its laws, and simply sits back waiting for miracles; that God should do everything for him. No. God designed the natural world for a reason: that man use his mind and harness it, as God says in Genesis 1:28, "...fill the Earth and subdue it". Man must act in accordance with its reality. Reality teaches us that we do need shelter, and that there are methods by which to procure that, and all our needs. We are to engage in these methods, be it natural science, engineering, math, etc. But we cannot depend on physical shelter alone, without God. Schach is a fundamental lesson: it combines man's attempt at sheltering himself with the realization that man's efforts always require God assistance. Schach – a structure which man creates but allows gaps to see God's stars – demonstrates the combination of man's obligatory attempts of physical shelter, with God's providence (the gaps). Thereby, man reflects on God's heavenly bodies, and reminds himself that just as his brick home is equally dependent on God, so too, all else is not exclusively in our hands.

The true lesson of Succos is that man abandons the fallacy that he can address all his needs without God. ■

(Succos cont. from pg. 1)

## Succos

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**Succot when I brought them forth from the land of Egypt. I am Hashem your G-d.”** (VaYikra 23:42-43)

Our passages describe a fundamental mitzvah of the festival of Succot. We are required to live in thatched huts – Succot – for seven days. The Torah explains the reason for this commandment. The mitzvah reminds us of the Succot of the wilderness. During the sojourn in the wilderness, the nation dwelled in these insignificant structures. These huts provided minimal protection from the harsh elements of the wilderness. Nonetheless, the nation survived the sojourn and even thrived. This experience provides testimony to the providence of the Almighty over His people. During the festival of Succot, we reenact the experience of the wilderness. Through this process we are reminded of the Almighty's providence.

In Tractate Succah, the Talmud suggests that an important law can be derived from these passages. The first mishne of the Tractate records various laws regarding the structure of the succah. One of these requirements is that the structure may not be higher than twenty cubits – the equivalent of thirty to forty feet. The mishne does not state the reason for this restriction. However, the Gemarra poses the question. What is the reason for the limit on the succah's height? The Talmud offers various explanations. One is derived from our passages.

The Sage Rabba suggests that our passages provide a reason for restricting the height of the succah. According to Rabba's interpretation, the passage requires the height of the succah to be consistent with the purpose or character of the structure. The essential component of the succah is its roof or covering. This covering must be composed of sechach – branches or vegetation. The character of the roof must be evident to its occupant. A person's immediate range of vision extends to a height of only twenty cubits. If the succah is within twenty cubits, the occupant is aware of the sechach. If the height exceeds twenty cubits, the sechach is above the person's range of vision. The occupant will not be cognizant of the sechach.[1]

Rabba's position raises a number of questions. First, how does Rabba derive his principle from our passages? Our passages state that we are required to dwell in the succah during the festival. The passages also explain the reason for this mitzvah. It is intended to remind us of the huts in

the wilderness. The passage does not seem to state any structural restriction.

The second difficulty with Rabba's position requires a brief introduction. The Torah contains 613 commandments. Each commandment has a reason or purpose. In some instances, the purpose of a commandment is not revealed. In other cases, the reason is revealed. What intentions or thoughts must a person have in performing a commandment? Certainly, a full understanding of a commandment enhances its performance. But what is the minimum cognizance required in performing a mitzvah?

There is a dispute among the Sages regarding this issue. Some maintain that a person must be aware that the activity is a commandment. Others take a different position. They assert that the person must consciously perform the activity required by the mitzvah. However, the person is not required to recognize that the performance is a commandment.

An example will illustrate the dispute. Assume a person picks up the Four Species. The person is not thinking about the activity and is barely aware of the action. Both authorities agree that the commandment has not been performed. Now, assume a person picks up the species. The action is done with intention and forethought. However, the person is not aware of the mitzvah of the Four Species. Has the commandment been

performed? The more lenient view is that the mitzvah has been fulfilled. The more stringent view is that the commandment has not been performed. The person was not aware of performing a commandment.

It must be noted that neither position maintains that the person must be aware of the purpose of the mitzvah! This higher level of understanding and thought is not required for the minimal performance of a mitzvah.

We can now understand the second question on Rabba's position. Rabba maintains that the occupant of the succah must be aware of the sechach. Why is this necessary? The most obvious explanation is that the sechach reminds us of the purpose of the commandment. The occupant's awareness of the sechach assures recognition of the purpose of the mitzvah. In other words, performance of the mitzvah of succah requires cognizance of its purpose!

This requirement is an anomaly in halacha. At most, we are required to be aware that we are performing a commandment. Generally, a

(continued on next page)

mitzvah is achieved without awareness of its purpose. In other words, Rabba posits that it is insufficient for the succah to merely reflect the purpose of the mitzvah. The height must assure that the occupant is actually aware of the purpose in performing the commandment. This level of awareness is not generally required.

The commentaries offer a number of responses to our first question. One of the simple explanations is provided by Rabbaynu Nissim. He begins by acknowledging that the passages have a clear simple interpretation. The passages state a commandment and its purpose. He then explains that these objectives could be accomplished in a more concise manner. The passages could have merely stated that we are required to live in the succah during the festival because Hashem caused us to live in huts during the sojourn in the wilderness. Instead, the passages contain a seemingly superfluous phrase. This phrase is, "This is so that your future generations will know". This entire phrase could have been replaced by the single word "because". Every word and phrase in the Torah has a message. Rabba is providing an interpretation of the seeming verbose wording of the passages. The additional phrase has a message. The message is that the succah must be constructed in a manner that makes known to its occupants the purpose of the commandment. This is accomplished by restricting the height of the succah. Through this regulation, the sechach is within the visual range of the occupants. The sechach reminds these occupants of the purpose of the mitzvah.[2]

BaCh extends Rabbaynu Nissim's reasoning in order to answer our second question. He begins by noting an oddity in the Tur's discussion of the mitzvah of succah. The Tur is a code of halacha. Generally, the Tur does not expound upon the theological purpose of commandments. However, in a few instances the Tur deviates from this policy. One of these instances is the mitzvah of succah. The Tur's discussion begins with an elaboration on the purpose of the mitzvah. The Tur then explain various laws and requirements of the mitzvah in light of its purpose.[3] BaCh asks the obvious question. Why does the Tur deviate from its usual method of presentation and digress into this theological discussion?

BaCh responds that the answer lies in our passages. Rabbaynu Nissim observes that the passages are apparently verbose. He explains that the seemingly extra phrase is establishing a structural requirement. BaCh asks a simple question. How do the passages communicate this message? He responds that the passages tell us that it is not sufficient for the succah to reflect its purpose. The succah must effectively

communicate its message to the occupants. This communication is accomplished through fostering an awareness of the sechach. In other words, the passages establish a unique requirement for this mitzvah. The reason for the mitzvah must be communicated. Cognizance of purpose is fundamental to performance of the commandment.

BaCh explains that now we can understand the Tur's digression into the purpose of the mitzvah of succah. In the case of most mitzvot this discussion is irrelevant. Performance of the commandment does not require appreciation of its purpose. The Tur's mission is to define the elements required for proper performance of the mitzvah. A discussion of the mitzvah's purpose is not relevant to this objective.

The mitzvah of succah is different. Our passages establish a unique requirement for the fulfillment of the mitzvah of succah. In this instance, cognizance of purpose is fundamental to the proper performance of the mitzvah. Therefore, it is appropriate for the Tur to discuss this purpose.[4]

We can now answer our second question on Rabba. Our interpretation of Rabba is correct. He does acknowledge the role of a special cognizance in the performance of the mitzvah of succah. The structure must foster an awareness of purpose. Generally, this level of awareness is not needed. However, our passages establish a special requirement for the mitzvah of succah. In the performance of this mitzvah, cognizance of purpose is fundamental to the performance.

**"If rain begins to fall, one enters the house. At what point can one leave? Once enough drops are falling so that were they to fall into the food, they would ruin it... Rama: This applies even if there is no food present. If one is not competent in making this measurement, one can evaluate the rain as follows: If this much rain leaked into one's house, would one leave the house? If so, one leaves the succah."** (Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 639:5)

**"Anyone who is exempt from the succah and does not leave it, does not receive a reward for this behavior. Rather he is considered simple-minded..."** (Rama, Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 639:7)

During the festival of Succot we are commanded to live in the succah. We must make the succah our dwelling or residence. This mitzvah is fulfilled through transferring basic daily activities to the succah. At a minimum, we should eat and sleep in the succah. Performing additional activities in the succah increases the fulfillment of the mitzvah.

Generally, we are exempt from the mitzvah of

living in the succah if rain renders it unfit for use. At what point is the succah unfit? Rama provides a simple rule. The succah should be treated as

ones' house. If the rain would cause a person to leave one's house and seek better shelter, one can leave the succah.

This raises an important question. Assume it is raining. The downpour is heavy enough to exempt me from dwelling in my succah. Is there any reason to stay in the succah? In the case of most commandments we would respond in the affirmative. Even if one is exempt from a commandment, one is still rewarded for its fulfillment. Women are exempt from the commandment of Shofar. Yet, common practice is for women to hear the shofar blasts. We would expect the same principle to apply here. Based on this reasoning, there would be a reward for eating in a dripping succah.

Rama explains that this is not the case. In the instance of a succah that is dripping rain, there is no benefit in remaining in the succah. He supports his view by quoting the Talmud Yerushalmi. The Talmud explains that anyone who is exempt from a command and nonetheless performs it, is considered a simpleton.[5]

As we have shown above, the rule of the Yerushalmi cannot be universally applied. In many cases, we recognize the validity of an exempt person performing a mitzvah. When does the Yerushalmi's principle apply? Why does it apply to the rain sodden succah?

It seems that there are two circumstances under which a person is exempt from a mitzvah. First, a person can be exempt because the obligation to perform the command does not extend to this individual. Our case of a woman and the mitzvah of shofar is an example of this situation. Women are not obligated in the mitzvah. Similarly, women are not obligated in the mitzvah of shaking the four species. However, if a woman executes these commandments, the performance is valid. Therefore, a woman is rewarded for listening to the shofar blasts and shaking the four species. Despite their exemption, they have executed a valid performance of the mitzvah.

Second, a person can be exempt from a mitzvah because this individual cannot perform the commandment. Imagine a person who, unfortunately, has lost both arms. This person cannot perform the mitzvah of placing one of the teffilin on his arm. This person is not merely exempted from the mitzvah. Performance is impossible. In such a case, any attempt to perform the commandment is obviously foolish. Apparently, the Yerushalmi refers to this situation.

Based on this distinction, Rav Chaim Soloveit-

(continued on next page)

(Succos continued from page 3)

## Succos

chik Zt'l explains the position of Rama. We are required to dwell in the succah. If a person cannot be comfortable in the succah because of rain, extreme cold or some other condition, the person is exempt. Rav Chaim explained that this exemption is not because the obligation does not extend to this person. The exemption results from a more basic issue. Dwelling in the succah, under such circumstances, is not recognized as the type of dwelling required by the mitzvah. As Rama explains, we must evaluate whether a person would dwell in one's house under such circumstances. If the answer is negative, then this is not the type of dwelling required by the mitzvah. The rain makes it impossible to perform the commandment. Therefore, remaining in the succah serves no purpose.[6]

**“The Holy One Blessed Be He wished to benefit Israel. Therefore He provided them with many laws and commandments.”**  
(Tractate Makkot 23b)

On Simchat Torah we celebrate the annual completion of reading of the Torah and the initiation of a new cycle. This celebration is an acknowledgement of the importance of the Torah. Implicitly, we affirm the Almighty's kindness in providing us with the Torah.

The quotation above discusses the benefit we derive from the Torah. In order to understand this insight, we must begin with the simple meaning of the quotation. The Torah is composed of six hundred thirteen commandments. Each of these commandments includes a multitude of laws. The laws define the manner in which the commandment is fulfilled. For example, the Torah directs us to dwell in a succah during the celebration of Succot. This is a mitzvah. Various laws are needed to define the means of fulfilling this obligation. The laws describe the structure of the succah. The laws also define the meaning of “dwelling”. In other words, the laws delineate the specific acts required to establish a state of dwelling in the succah.

Many of these mitzvot seem to serve similar purposes. We are required to dwell in the succah in order to remember our exodus from Egypt and our sojourn in the wilderness. The celebration of Pesach also recalls our exodus from Egypt. Shabbat is associated with the redemption from Egypt. The requirement to recite the last paragraph of the Shema is designed to remind us of our rescue from bondage. Why are so many mitzvot required? Why is a single theme reinforced by a multiplicity of commandments?

This is the issue addressed by our Sages in the above quotation. The Sages respond that this very redundancy somehow enriches us. The Sages do not clearly explain the nature of this



benefit. We must solve this mystery. We must identify the exact benefit to which they allude.

Sefer HaChinuch provides a solution to this problem. He explains that the Torah is both a system of laws and a personal philosophy and outlook. Clearly, an objective of the Torah is to teach us this outlook and encourage our assimilation of this philosophy.

How is this objective met? Commonly, a teacher or scholar wishing to teach a novel philosophy communicates its tenets. The student must master these tenets and incorporate them into a personal world-view. This is a formidable task. If the philosophy is truly unique, it will be difficult to assimilate. The student may clearly understand its principles. Yet, it is difficult to revise one's perspective and world-view. These attitudes are ingrained. They are part of the personality. Therefore, this new philosophy fails to effect a real change in the student.

The Torah solved this problem through combining its philosophy with mitzvot. The commandments provide the means for assimilating the Torah outlook. These mitzvot train us to see reality through the perspective of the Torah. Let us return to our example. There are many mitzvot that share the goal of reminding us of our redemption from Egypt. These mitzvot are redundant. But there is a reason for the redundancy. Though repeated actions that reinforce the message of redemption, we assimilate this concept into our personal outlook. The mitzvot translate the Torah's philosophy into a personal outlook.

We can now understand the insight of our Sages. The Almighty wanted us to actually benefit from the wisdom of the Torah. This requires that we absorb this wisdom and incorporate it into our personal world-view. Therefore, He gave us a multitude of laws and mitzvot. These laws and mitzvot enable us to mold our personal perspective.[7] ■

[1] Mesechet Succah 2a.

[2] Rabbaynu Nissim ben Reuven, (Ran) Notes to Commentary of Rabbaynu Yitzchak Alfasi, Mesechet Succah 1a.

[3] Rabbaynu Yaakov ben HaRash, Tur Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 625.

[4] Rav Yoel Sircus, (BaCh), Bayit Chadash Commentary on Tur, Orech Chayim 625.

[5] Talmud Yerushalmi, Mesechet Berachot 2:9.

[6] Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, Reshimat Shuirim, Succah, pp. 92-93.

[7] Rav Ahron HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 16.

## Letters



# Letters

*from our*

# READERS



**Reader:** (Berakhot 6a) "Ravin son of Rav Ada asked, "What is the source that God wears Tefillin?" The Talmud makes derivations from various Torah verses, ultimately validating that God "wears" Tefillin.

How are we to understand this?

**Mesora:** Of course, this Talmudic portion can – in no way – be taken literally, since: 1) God is not able to "wear" Tefillin, as He is not physical as are Tefillin, and 2) He does not perform the commands He gave man. For commands are to perfect those who are imperfect! They apply to those ignorant of such perfecting activities, and God knows all, and is perfect. As so many great Sages taught, including King Solomon (Proverbs) and Abraham son of Maimonides (intro to Ain Yaakov) the Rabbis speak in riddles and metaphors. This portion must be understood metaphorically.

The Talmud asks a central question: "What is written in Hashem's Tefillin? R. Chiya bar Avin says, "And who is like Israel, a unique nation in the land!" God told Israel, "You made Me unique by reciting 'Listen Israel; God is our God, God is One' – I will make you unique [by reciting] 'And

who is like Israel, a unique nation in the land?"

To unravel this metaphor, we must identify the central point, and that is: what is "written in God's Tefillin?" as the Talmud metaphorically suggests. Since the main question is concerning God's Tefillin (Tefillin contain texts) we must focus on the 'text' the Rabbis suggest are "written in God's Tefillin".

We also note the reciprocal relationship between Israel's claim of God's Oneness, and then God's response that Israel too is unique, and One. This too is a central point.

Tefillin must be defined. OUR Tefillin that is. These boxes contain the Shema: our proclamation of monotheism. The Torah teaches that when other nations see our Tefillin, they will see God's name on them, and they will fear the Jews. They will recognize their fabricated religions as fabrications, and that the Jews are distinguished by God's providence. This frightens the idolatrous nations; when they realize their lives of idolatry are false. The nations are also frightened by the insurmountable task of battling those, whom God favors. But God want's all nations to follow Him. He only gave the Jews – and no other – a Torah, since they possessed true monotheistic ideas received from Abraham. It was due to Abraham that God spread His providence over Abraham's descendants.

So when the Jews proclaim the Shema, "Listen Israel; God is our God, God is One", God in turn increases the Jews' recognition, fame and distinction, so ALL nations might learn to fear and love God. That is what it means that "God's Tefillin state that Israel is unique". This means that just as man's Tefillin have the purpose to distinguish the Creator as One, God in turn amplifies this crucial message by giving Israel – the monotheistic proclaimers – a global voice. God – as it were – "wears Tefillin" that duplicate Israel's attempt at claiming God's Oneness. By distinguishing Israel, God in fact assists His plan to help the entire world recognize what is true, and abandon falsehood.

Had we understood this Talmudic portion literally, we would ascribe to God physical properties that allow Him to wear physical Tefillin, and this is the worst sin. This is idolatry. Additionally, it would be no praise to God that He simply wears Tefillin. What praise is that?

What is true, is that this is a metaphor that sustains the truth that God is not physical. It also teaches that His "Tefillin" is really a metaphor for His actions of favoring the Jew in real acts of kindness on Earth. "Actions" are praiseworthy; merely wearing Tefillin is not. This is in contrast to a literal and foolish understanding where God does no acts for Israel, but simply "wears Tefillin".



Succos is the holiday when in the future, all nations will bring sacrifices to God, with Israel. The entire world will recognize that "we have inherited falsehood from our fathers". (Jeremiah, 16:19) It is the Jews' role to teach all peoples the Torah. We must not cower and thereby hide truth from our fellow man. As Abraham exemplified, we too must be concerned wit God's creations...all of them. We must courageously, gently, but religiously, make truth available.

Our greatest kings are descendants from Ruth the convert...and so will be the Messiah. Our greatest Sages were converts. The Torah says numerous times, "One law for the Jew and the convert". No man is superior by birth; only by his or her choices. If one feels a Jew has a superior soul, or is better than any other human to whom God granted life, that person violates God's words.

Yom Kippur just passed; we were atoned for our sins, the greatest sin being our lack of Torah study. It is only through Torah study that we will recognize the truth, and exemplify it for all mankind.

May we all take it upon ourselves to abandon the practice of seeking self-aggrandizement, to bury the words "superior Jew", to earnestly seek out teachers who will show us God's words, and ultimately pave the road for Messiah, the descendant of Ruth the Moabite convert whom God loved. ■

## Succos



# the Joy of Lulav

YAAKOV TRACHTMAN

**“And you shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees (Etrog), branches of palm-trees (Lulav), and boughs of chained trees (Hadas), and willows of the brook (Arava), and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.” (Vayikra 23:40)**

The Torah describes the Mitzvah of Lulav as an act of rejoicing. How is picking up a bundle of foliage considered joyful?

In order to understand this, we must first seek an understanding for the action itself. What is the idea of “picking up”? We only pick things up when we have an interest in them. In general we are only interested in practical utility. For example: I will take an Esrog to eat, or a Lulav from which to make a broom. The Mitzvah is telling us to do something very strange, to pick something up with no purpose in mind.

If we look around, which group of people will enjoy just picking things up without any utility in mind? The one group, which stands out, is young children. We often see young children pick things up and put them down without any apparent reason. What reason do they have to act that way? Children are involved in discovering the world; their natural curiosity has not been affected by social expectations. They enjoy the ‘mere’ experience of discovery. Among adults such pleasure is also possible, as can be seen in the theoretical scientist. The natural world provides ample opportunity to gain new insight into the endless wisdom of the Creator. If we shift our view from a self-centered, pragmatic way

of viewing things to a universal theoretical way of viewing things...we can enjoy the good of the creation itself.

The Mitzvah of Lulav is leading us to this viewpoint. It tells to take this branch, but don’t use it. Take this fruit, but don’t eat it. Just enjoy them for what they are: expressions of the natural order.

In the Torah SheBaal Peh (Oral Law) Lulav has an added dimension. The Rabbis mention the Pasuk: “Then shall the trees of the wood sing for joy, before the LORD, for He is come to judge the earth”[i] as a reference to Lulav. The Mitzvah of Lulav is a Mitzvah of praise. The trees give praise through reflecting God’s greatness and wisdom as their Creator. This is true even now, however in the future people will recognize the wisdom: studying the trees will move people to praise. That will only happen in a complete sense in the future when God’s kingship is accepted by all of mankind. However after we accept God’s kingship on Rosh Hashanah, on Succos we can recognize the ‘consequence’ of His kingship, which is that all of nature manifest his greatness.

This idea is especially important at the harvest time. The farmer can easily fall into the trap of thinking that the crop is a result of his own power. If it is his own power then it’s purpose will only be to serve himself. Lulav shifts that focus. The crops are

given to him to eat but only as long as he recognizes that his utility is not their highest purpose. Their ultimate ‘purpose’ is to exist as an expression of God’s will. Therefore his eating must be for the purpose of studying the creation.

This explains why Lulav is a Mitzvah of joy. The whole idea of the Mitzvah is that approaching God is the greatest joy possible for man. Ultimately this is through studying the creation as a whole, but on a micro level it is through studying the wisdom of the Mitzvah system.

This also explains why the Pasuk of Lulav is the source for the Simchas Beis HaShoeva. That celebration is one where the Talmidei Chachamim publicly demonstrate their love for, and joy in doing Mitzvos, even those which are acts of servitude. The rest of the nation comes to witness that joy which gives them a desire for it. People find it hard to believe that wisdom is enjoyable. Seeing living examples makes it something real and worth aspiring to.

Such a celebration is only possible in the Mikdash; the place where God’s existence and wisdom is manifest to all people, even those who don’t see it in the creation. Only in that situation of “being before God” can the Mitzvah of Lulav be expressed for the full seven days. ■

[i] Divrei HaYamim 1 16:33

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## Succos



## Letters

*from our*

## READERS



**Reader:** Can you please explain the relationship of the Lulav and Etrog to Succah. On most holidays, there is usually a relationship between the mitzvot and the holiday like maztah on Pesach, or the succah and Succos. What is the purpose of the Lulav and Etrog? I am finding it very hard to find any information. Of the many I have spoken to, little information is known. The main response I get is "we do it because we are commanded to by G-d". Well this of course is a given, but find it hard to accept as an answer.

**Mesora:** In his book entitled Horeb [1], Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explained a close relationship between the Succah, and the Etrog and Lulav. I will mention his ideas, followed by my thoughts - stimulated by Rabbi Hirsch.

The Succah, a minimalistic structure, is to focus man on a minimizing his material lifestyle. This teaches man that pursuit of the physical world is not the goal of our temporary, Earthly existence. The lulav too embodies the correct attitude towards the source of all physical good. We demonstrate our thanks to G-d for His bountiful harvest. We realize G-d alone has complete dominion over the world.

The Talmud states, (Succah 37b) "Why do we wave the Lulav? R. Yochanan said, we wave out and back (horizontally) to the One who owns all four directions on Earth, and we wave the Lulav up and down to the One Who owns heaven and Earth". Rabbi Yochanan - in my opinion - separated the two acts of waving "in/out" from "up/down" to teach us that there are two areas of G-d's dominion which we need to realize: G-d owning all four directions refers to something other than heaven and Earth. We see this clearly, i.e. that He is the Creator of all. This is why we wave up/down. But if up and down waving covers heaven and Earth, i.e., all creation, what is left to recognize about G-d's greatness? I believe it is to emphasize His dominion over man's actions - that G-d has complete knowledge of our travels on Earth (our actions) as alluded to by the "four directions", which is limited to Earthly activity. This subtle difference points us to the realization that there are two distinct areas in which we must attest to G-d's greatness: 1) G-d is omnipotent, He can do all, as He created heaven and Earth, 2) G-d is omniscient, He knows all, as He is aware of all our travels and actions.

Interestingly, these are the two main themes of the High Holiday prayers, "Malchyo" (omnipotence), and "Zichrono" (omniscience). Rabbi Yochanan's view is that our waving of the four species on Succos must demonstrate G-d's dominion in all areas; in His creation, and in His government of man.

Why must the Succah be temporal and frail by design? Succah breaks man away from his insecurities regarding his wealth. Man continuously and falsely attempts to compensate for physical insecurity by striving for riches. Man must strive to focus on G-d as his Sole Benefactor, instead of relying on the work of his hands. The drive towards the physical as an ends, removes G-d from man's life. Lulav contrasts Succah by emphasizing the use of the physical for the right reasons. We thank G-d - the Source of our bounty - replacing our faulted view of the physical, with this proper thanks to G-d for providing vegetation. All physical objects that we are fortunate to receive should be used in recognition of the 'Supplier' of these fruits, and not to reaffirm our own physical strength.

It also makes sense that Succah - not Lulav - is used to demonstrate man's required break from the physical. Man's home is the one object which embodies Earthly permanence,...not so man's food. Therefore, I believe a frail home - a Succah - is used as opposed to fruits - which are consumed objects, and do not afford man the satisfaction of permanence. Since man does not attach himself to fruits as he does his home, the home is from where man must make his break.

Perhaps this is why we also read Koheles (Ecclesiastes) on Succos. In this philosophical masterpiece, King Solomon presents the correct philosophy for man, in relation to work, wealth, happiness, sadness, and primarily, in accomplishments. King Solomon states numerous times, "what extra is there for man in all is toil that he toils under the sun?" He even commences his work with his summary, "All is futility of futility...". The Rabbis questioned King Solomon's statement, "How can King Solomon say all is futile, when G-d said in Genesis that the world is very good?" The answer is that Solomon was referring only to the physical as an ends in itself as futile. When G-d said it was good, He meant that as long as it serves only as a 'means' to man's pursuit of wisdom. There is no contradiction between King Solomon and G-d.

In summary, Succah breaks down man's weighty attachment to the physical. Lulav redirects that attachment towards G-d, the source of all our sustenance.

Fulfill the obligations of this Succos holiday. Adhere to the commands of eating, drinking, and certainly sleeping in the succah, even light naps. Make the scach (Succah covering) from detached plant life such as reeds, wood, or bamboo, so you may gaze through the gaps at the stars as you lie on your bed - recognizing your Creator, the Creator of the universe. Wave the lulav and esrog in all four horizontal directions demonstrating G-d's exclusive dominion over all man's affairs. Wave the lulav upwards and downwards, demonstrating G-d's exclusive creation of that which is up and down - heaven and Earth.

By living in these frail huts, may we strip ourselves of our own false security, and may our waving of the lulav and esrog redirect our security towards the One who provides a bountiful life - realizing that our ultimate protection and security comes from G-d. ■

[1] Soncino Press, 6th English Edition 1997, pp 132