

TORONTO TORAH

SUKKOT 5787

14 Tishrei 5787

September 25, 2026



Candlelighting | 6:51 PM

Havdallah Sunday Night | 7:56 PM (50 minutes after שקיעה)

The Day After We Become Angels



RABBI YEHUDAH MANN | דבר תורה

There is a famous *vort* about one of the customs of Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur, we try to live like **malachim** — angels.

We do not eat or drink. We dress in white. We spend the day removed from ordinary physical life, immersed in *tefillah*, *teshuvah*, and closeness to Hashem. And perhaps most famously, we proclaim aloud: “**Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuto Le’olam Va’ed.**”

Throughout the year we whisper these words. But on Yom Kippur, when we are like angels, we say them aloud.

But there is an obvious question. At the **beginning** of Yom Kippur, we have barely started! We are still full from the *seudah hamafseket*. We have not yet fasted or spent hours davening — and already we proclaim *Baruch Shem* like angels.

Yet at the **end** of Yom Kippur, after twenty-five hours of fasting, *tefillah*, *vidui*, inspiration, and spiritual elevation, we immediately return to whispering it.

Why?

The famous answer is that a person is defined not only by where he is, but by **where he is heading**. At the beginning of Yom Kippur, we are beginning our ascent toward the level of angels. When Yom Kippur ends, we are heading back toward food, work, and ordinary human life.

It is a beautiful answer. **But it also sounds a little depressing!**

Is that really what happens after Yom Kippur? After *Ne’ilah*, after crying out *Shema Yisrael*, and “**Hashem Hu HaElokim!**” — are we simply coming back down?

I would like to suggest exactly the opposite. **We are not coming down. We are moving up to the next challenge.** We become human again. And in one sense, **being human can be even greater than being an angel.**

The *Yismach Yisrael* of Alexander offers a beautiful interpretation of the Gemara describing Moshe Rabbeinu ascending to Heaven to receive the Torah. The angels protest: Why should the Torah be given to human beings?

Hashem tells Moshe: “**Achoz b’Kisei Kevodi, v’hachzer lahem teshuvah**” — “**Hold on to My Throne of Glory and answer them.**”

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a”h, מירל צביה בת דוד
&
אחיאל מיכל בן יהושע, a”h



KIDS CORNER



PARSHAT TRIVIA

- 1 What are the four species we use on Sukkot?
- 2 Which one smells the nicest?
- 3 Which one looks like a palm leaf?
- 4 What do we sit in on Sukkot?
- 5 What do we shake on Sukkot?

ANSWERS

- 1 Lulav, etrog, hadas, and arava
- 2 The etrog
- 3 The lulav
- 4 A sukkah
- 5 The lulav and etrog

Surrounded by Holiness



RABBI AMI YUNGER | מחשבה

Most mitzvot ask us to perform a particular holy act. We take a lulav, give tzedakah, learn Torah or daven. The mitzvah of sukkah is different. We simply live.

We eat in the sukkah. We drink, talk, spend time with family and friends, and even sleep there. Activities that we perform every day suddenly become part of a mitzvah simply because they take place within the walls of the sukkah.

Rav Eliezer Melamed, in *Peninei Halakha*, explains that this reflects a deeper idea. Kabbalah distinguishes between an **אור פנימי**, an inner light, and an **אור מקיף**, a surrounding light. An inner light is something that we can consciously absorb and understand. It elevates those moments that are explicitly spiritual: Torah, tefillah and mitzvot.

But Hashem's light is greater than what we can consciously contain. There is also an **אור מקיף**, a holiness that surrounds us and has the ability to encompass our entire lives. This is the unique holiness of the sukkah. We do not only perform a mitzvah inside it; we enter the mitzvah ourselves. Even eating, sleeping and ordinary conversation can become part of serving Hashem.

Rav Melamed explains that this is also the deeper mission of Am Yisrael. Torah is meant to illuminate the entirety of human existence: family life, relationships, work, business and even scientific discovery. Our mission is to reveal that even the seemingly ordinary parts of life can be connected to kedushah.

This helps explain the remarkable connection between two mitzvot: **sukkah and living in Eretz Yisrael**. The Vilna Gaon taught that these are two unique mitzvot that a Jew performs with the entire body. We perform many mitzvot with our hands, our mouths or our minds. But we do not merely perform the mitzvah of sukkah; we physically enter it. The same is true of Eretz Yisrael. The mitzvah surrounds us. Our entire body exists within its space.

The Vilna Gaon connected these two mitzvot to the verse: **וְיָהִי בְשֵׁלָם סֶכֶד וּמִעוֹנָתוֹ בְּצִיּוֹן**
“His sukkah was in Shalem, and His dwelling place in Zion.”
(Tehillim 76:3)

This physical reality expresses something deeper. Both mitzvot are **מקיפות**, encompassing. They do not sanctify only one action; they create an environment in which the rest of life can be elevated. In the sukkah, eating, drinking and sleeping become part of the mitzvah. In Eretz Yisrael, the Jewish home, agriculture, education, work and daily nation-building can all become vessels for the Shechinah.

The sukkah reminds us of the **ענני הכבוד**, the Clouds of Glory that surrounded Am Yisrael in the desert. But those clouds were never meant to be our permanent home. We were travelling toward a land where our mission would be to take the Divine Presence that surrounded us in the desert and reveal it within ordinary life.

Sukkot teaches that holiness can surround and transform ordinary life. Eretz Yisrael extends this lesson beyond the sukkah, challenging us to build a society in which Hashem's presence is revealed.

Al Netilat Yadayim



RABBI ORI IDELS | תפילה

Upon awakening in the morning, one must perform *netilat yadayim* before touching any orifices of the body. The *Rishonim* debated the fundamental reason for this washing. According to the Rosh, during sleep a person likely touches covered and unclean parts of the body; therefore, one must cleanse their hands prior to *tefillah*. The Rashba, however, maintains that this washing is unique to waking from the night's sleep, independent of cleanliness. During the night, the Holy One, Blessed be He, takes back our souls and returns them in the morning, as expressed in *Modeh Ani*. Hand-washing serves to consecrate this renewed soul for *avodat Hashem*. In *halakha*, we rule *le'chumra* in accordance with both rationales.

Why Wash Specifically the Hands?

According to the rationale of cleanliness, the answer is straightforward, as the hands are the limbs that came into contact with impurities. Yet according to the rationale of spiritual sanctification, one might assume that a person should immerse their entire body in a *mikveh* each morning, rather than suffice with washing the hands alone.

Rav Kook addresses this exact question. He explains that the hands represent a person's presence within *olam ha'ma'aseh*, as human deeds are predominantly carried out through the hands. The morning hand-washing is designed to elevate mundane, physical human endeavors so that they are directed *l'shem Shamayim*. Rav Kook further elaborates that it is not merely the act of pouring water that elevates a person, but the *berakha* itself.

Let us examine the wording of the blessing to understand how the phrasing itself elevates us. The expression *al netilat yadayim* is puzzling. Seemingly, the formulation should have been *al taharat yadayim*, *al kiddush yadayim*, or *al nikkuy ha'yadayim*. Why specifically the term *netilah*?

This question engaged the *Geonim* and the *Rishonim*. Some suggested an etymological origin: the vessel used for washing, which held the required volume of a *revi'it*, was historically called an *antel*.

Other *Geonim* wrote that since one must raise their hands upward after washing, the Sages instituted the term *netilah* based on the verse in Yeshayahu, “*Vayinatlem va'yenase'em*”—and He bore them and carried them [2]—teaching that the essence of *netilah* is the lifting and elevation of the hands.

Furthermore, *netilah* can be understood in its simple biblical sense as taking, which aligns beautifully with Rav Kook's insight. Chazal sought to hint that through *netilat yadayim*, we take all of our impending actions throughout the day and dedicate them to the Almighty.

A Reflection for the Coming Week

Choose one mundane act of *chullin* that is already part of your weekly routine—a business phone call, the morning commute, or preparing a family meal. A moment before you begin, pause for thirty seconds and ask yourself: “How do I elevate this moment to the realm of kedushah?” Whether it is by greeting someone with warmth, listening with extra patience, or keeping in mind that earning a living and daily labor are meant to build a home of *chesed*.

Hatzlacha!

The Day After We Become Angels

(continued from page 1)

Normally, *hachzer lahem teshuvah* means: “Give them an answer.” But the Alexander Rebbe reads it differently. **What is the answer to the angels? Teshuvah!**

That is precisely the greatness of a human being. Angels do not struggle with a *yetzer hara*. They do not make mistakes and then find the courage to change. They do not fall and then fight their way back up. **We do.**

And Chazal tell us: “**Gedolah teshuvah shemaga’at ad Kisei HaKavod**” — **Teshuvah is so great that it reaches the very Throne of Glory.**

Our struggles are not merely our weakness. They are also our incredible opportunity.

Every temptation we overcome, every bad habit we fight, every time we fall and refuse to remain down, we reach a place an angel can never reach.

And perhaps this is exactly why, only a few days after Yom Kippur, Hashem gives us **Sukkot**.

Because what happens next is remarkable. On Yom Kippur, we become holy by **not eating**. On Sukkot, Hashem tells us: **Now eat — and make the eating itself holy!**

Eat your dinner in the sukkah. Drink there. Sit with your family and friends. Sing, laugh, celebrate — and turn those ordinary human experiences into mitzvos. And Hashem does not merely allow us to enjoy ourselves. He commands us: “**Vesamachta b’chagecha**” — **You shall rejoice in your festival!**

Yom Kippur teaches us that we can rise **above** the physical world. Sukkot teaches us something even greater: **we can elevate the physical world itself.**

Hashem does not want us to remain angels. He wants us to bring the holiness of Yom Kippur **back into our everyday lives** — into our homes, our families, our meals, our work, our joys, and our struggles.

On Yom Kippur, we become angels. On Sukkot, we return to being human — **but hopefully, we are no longer the same human beings.**

And that is our challenge after the final shofar blast: **not to remain angels, but to become the holy, joyful, growing human beings Hashem created us to be.**

The Water Libation and Our Connection to Israel

RABBI ORI EZRA | ארץ ישראל



One of the most prominent mitzvot of Sukkot, when the Beit HaMikdash stood, was the mitzvah of Nisuch HaMayim, the water libation.

Every day, as korbanot were brought on the mizbeach, wine was poured into special openings in the altar. On Sukkot, water was poured as well. The water was drawn in a joyful ceremony, and each night of the festival, the Beit HaMikdash was filled with a tremendous celebration known as Simchat Beit HaShoeva, the joy of the water drawing.

At the conclusion of the celebration, the crowd would go to Maayan HaShiloach, where they would draw the water amid shofar blasts and bring it back to the Beit HaMikdash. The water entered through a special gate called Shaar HaMayim, the Water Gate. Nisuch HaMayim had a practical purpose: it was a prayer for the rains of the coming year. Rabbi Akiva teaches that on Pesach we bring an offering of barley so that the crops will be blessed, on Shavuot we bring the Bikkurim so that the fruits of the trees will be blessed, and on Sukkot we pour water so that the rains will be blessed. (Rosh Hashanah 16a)

The importance of rain is reflected in the prayer of the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur, when he prayed in the Kodosh HaKodashim for a year of abundant rain.

There is a deeper meaning in the water. Wine has taste, while water has no taste. It is precisely the water, without taste, that expresses a deep connection between a Jew and Hashem, a connection that does not depend on understanding, explanation, or reason. From this came the tremendous joy of the Nisuch HaMayim.

This takes on special meaning in Israel. Even in an age of remarkable Israeli technology, when Israel can desalinate enormous amounts of seawater, tiny algae can sometimes be enough to shut down sophisticated pumps and systems. Ultimately, despite all our human capabilities, Israel still needs rain.

That is why we pray for rain in Israel. Rain is not merely a natural resource. It expresses the deep connection between us and Hashem, and our dependence upon Him.

May we be blessed with a year of abundant rain in Israel, abundant blessing, and a happy Sukkot!



Can a Non-Jew, Woman, or Child Build a Sukkah?

RABBI YEHUDA MANN | הלכה



Question: I would like to ask my non-Jewish handyman to build my sukkah. Is there any halachic issue with doing so?

Answer: Yes, you may have a non-Jewish handyman construct the walls and framework of your sukkah. Regarding the *s'chach*, although the sukkah would be kosher even if he placed it, it is preferable *lechatchilah* for an adult Jewish male to place the *s'chach*.

This question is actually part of a broader discussion: May a sukkah be built by someone who is not obligated in the mitzvah of sukkah? This includes not only a non-Jew, but also a woman, who is exempt from this time-bound positive mitzvah, and potentially a child below Bar Mitzvah.

The Gemara in *Sukkah* explicitly teaches that a *Sukkas Ganbach* is kosher. The acronym גנב"ך represents several categories of sukksos, with the *gimmel* referring to a *sukkah shel goyim*—a sukkah of non-Jews. This is codified in *Shulchan Aruch*, Orach Chaim 635:1.

The basic principle is that a sukkah does not need to be constructed *l'shem mitzvas sukkah*. Rather, it must be made *l'shem tzel*—as a structure intended to provide shade, as opposed to a permanent dwelling or merely for privacy.

Accordingly, a sukkah constructed by a non-Jew or woman can certainly be kosher.

Regarding a child, however, there is some discussion. Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky (*Kovetz Halachos*, p. 38) rules that a sukkah constructed by a minor is problematic because a child lacks sufficient *da'as* for the construction to be considered *l'shem tzel*. Interestingly, he notes that a non-Jewish child under thirteen may be different, since age thirteen does not have the same halachic significance for a non-Jew.

Other poskim, cited in *Piskei Teshuvos*, maintain that if a father instructs his young son to build the sukkah, the father's intention can establish the construction as *l'shem tzel*.

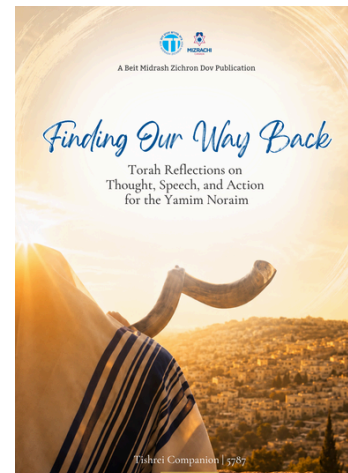
Nevertheless, there is a *lechatchilah* preference for the *s'chach*—the central element that creates the halachic sukkah—to be placed by an adult Jewish male who is obligated in the mitzvah. This accommodates the opinion that the preparation of a mitzvah object should preferably be performed by someone who is himself obligated in that mitzvah. Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky also notes that, due to the special *kedushah* associated with the sukkah, there is reason to prefer that its primary construction be performed by a *bar chiyuva*.

In summary: You may certainly have your non-Jewish handyman build the walls and framework. It is preferable for an adult Jewish male to place the *s'chach*. If a non-Jew or woman placed the *s'chach*, however, the sukkah is still kosher *me'ikar hadin*, provided it was constructed *l'shem tzel*. Regarding a minor, there is a dispute among the poskim.

Practical note: If you are actually planning to have a non-Jew build your sukkah, please consult your local rabbi for guidance on exactly how it should be done.

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