

Sukkot Insights

Messages of *Achdus* in the Mitzvos of Sukkos

Although the joy of last Sukkos was certainly overshadowed by the horrific events of Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah and the ensuing war, Sukkos remains *zeman simchaseinu*, and it is incumbent upon us to find ways to rejoice during this time. Reflecting on some of the positives that have come from last year's trials and tribulations may help us to do so. One of the most obvious positive outcomes of the challenges faced by klal Yisrael has been the profound sense of *achdus* displayed by the Jewish people in countless ways. This idea of unity is woven throughout the mitzvos we perform on Sukkos. A famous example of this is found in the *Midrash Rabbah* (*Emor* 30:12) that each of the four *minim* represents a particular type of Jew, ranging from the learned and pious to the unlearned

and unrighteous. Each of these Jews must be represented for the mitzvah to be fulfilled. Although the Rambam (*Hil. Lulav* 7:9) rules that one fulfills the mitzvah by taking each item individually, everyone agrees that it is preferable that they be taken together. In addition, the Gemara (*Sukkah* 11b) cites a *machlokes tanaim* as to whether the species must be bound together or not (*lulav tzarich egged*). Although the halacha is that one is *yotzei* if they are not bound, the Gemara concludes that one should bind them *lechatchilah*, since binding the four *minim* together is a fulfillment of *hiddur mitzvah*. Indeed, the message behind this resonates. When the Jewish people bind themselves together as one entity, it is a great *kiyum* of "zeh Keili vianveihu" — this is my God and I will glorify Him.

The *egged* that is used to bind the *minim* together is important to this message as well. One might have thought the since



Rabbi Yehuda Balsam

*Rosh Beit Midrash,
YU High School for Boys*

the purpose of binding the *minim* is to beautify the mitzvah, any nice-looking binder or bow would suffice. However, the *Shulchan Aruch* (651:1) rules that one should tie them together with a double knot, as this is the best manner to fulfill the *hiddur mitzvah*. This can be understood from the perspective of *achdus* as well. While it is certainly meaningful if the Jewish people can come together in a manner that appears beautiful, if we bind ourselves together superficially — with a bow or a single knot — we have not truly performed a *hiddur mitzvah*. It is only when we tie ourselves together with a *keshel shel kayamah* that we have truly glorified the name of our creator.

The sukkah itself contains a similar



See more shiurim and articles from
Rabbi Baslam at [www.yutorah.org/teachers/
Rabbi-Yehuda-Balsam](http://www.yutorah.org/teachers/Rabbi-Yehuda-Balsam)

message of unity for the Jewish people. The Gemara (27b) learns from the words of the Torah (Vayikra 23:42), *kol ha'erzrach B'Yisrael* (each citizen of Israel) that כל ישראל ראוין לישב בסוכה — the entire Jewish people are fit to reside in a single sukkah. Chazal understand that the prototypical sukkah that is described by the Torah is one that houses the totality of klal Yisrael. This obviously requires an astounding level of *achdus*, and serves as a vision for what we can achieve if we focus on putting aside our differences in the

fulfillment of Hashem's mitzvos.

One additional symbol of *achdus* (although there are many more) that can be found in the mitzvos of the chag is the circle. Throughout the holiday, we form many circles, whether during the *hoshanos* or dancing on Simchas Torah. The circle is a unique symbol of unity — no point is more important than another, and each point is equidistant from the center. Rav Soloveitchik related this to the Gemara at the conclusion of *Maseches Taanis* (31a), which relates that in the future

Hashem will make a circle of tzadikim and will reside in the center, and all of the tzadikim will point to Him.

Indeed, the secret to true unity is realizing that we are all here for the purpose of serving Hashem and getting closer to Him. If we use the sukkah and the *daled minim* to achieve this goal, we will find it easier to connect to our fellow Jews, sharing space in the sukkah, and merit finding our place on this circle, where we will point to the center and proclaim קוינו לו נגילה ונשמחה בישועתו זה ה' קוינו לו נגילה ונשמחה בישועתו.

