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# Making Space In A Crowded World

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**N**o one relishes feeling crowded in a room, car, elevator or just about anywhere.

Who hasn't been to the Kotel and felt the tightness of the crowd on a jam-packed Shabbos, Yom Tov or even an average Tuesday afternoon! How then did the Jewish people fit, and fit comfortably, when they were עולה לרגל?

Fortunately, the *Gemara* (*Yoma* 21a) provides the answer:

וְעוֹמְדִים צְפוּפִין, כְּשֶׁהֵן מִשְׁתַּחֲוִין מִשְׁתַּחֲוִין רוּחוּחִים, וְזֶה אֶחָד מֵעֲשָׂרָה נִסִּים שֶׁנַּעֲשׂוּ בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ.

*“And people stand crowded, still, when they bow, they bow spaced. And that is one of the ten miracles that were performed in the Temple.”*

Simply put, when the Jewish people were עולה לרגל, a miracle occurred and there was enough space for everyone. The exact nature of this miracle is subject to debate.

According to Rashi (ד"ה משתחוים)

the miracle was just that – more space:

נעשה להם נס והמקום מרחיב עד שיש ביניהן ארבע אמות שלא ישמע איש וידוי של חבירו שלא יכלם.

The space opened up while they bowed and each person had four *amos* worth of space in between one another. Moreover, Rashi adds a beautiful insight about the additional space. With more room between people an extra layer of privacy provided an essential buffer so that each person should not hear the *viduy* and personal confessions of someone else. So great was this miracle that it is included as one of ten נסים in the המקדש, as the states: (ה:ה) in משנה:

עשרה נסים נעשו לאבותינו בבית המקדש צפופים ומשתחוים רווחים ולא אמר אדם לחברו צר לי המקום שאלין בירושלים.

The *Chasam Sofer* offers a different and remarkable answer to this question.<sup>1</sup> The creation of more space was not simply a physical miracle. Rather, the miracle was

1 ע' חידושים על מסיומא בא. וגם שו"ת חת"ס חלק ב' (י"ד) סימן רלד ד"ה ופר"מ ד"ג.

that no one complained - something beyond normal behavior. Even though it might have felt crowded, the sheer ability to join together as a community, to stand with one another and participate as one ציבור was so overwhelmingly uplifting that it overshadowed any sense of discomfort. This was a reflection of the will of the people who knew that it is far better to be engaged in a communal effort than to be disconnected.<sup>2</sup>

We find this phenomenon in the world at large. In Malcolm Gladwell's *David & Goliath*, he includes many studies that undermine the popular notion that small class sizes, defined as a class of under fifteen children, result in a better educational experience. He notes not only that reducing class size significantly increases educational costs, but that a class with less than an average of 20-25 students lacks a diversity of voices. With that diversity, students can learn more from their peers and

teachers. Students are also more motivated in such a setting. In other words, when we make space for others, we become better learners and more engaged students.<sup>3</sup>

While the *Beis Hamikdash* might not yet be rebuilt, this particular miracle has reverberated throughout our history. The *Tashbetz*<sup>4</sup> writes about a shul in Yerushalayim that he described as mostly empty the rest of the year but that attracted a crowd of three hundred people on Shavuot, and still no one complained. He suggests that the miracle from the *Beis Hamikdash* is still happening (שׁוֹת תִּשְׁבֹּץ גִּרָא):

ואמרו כי עדיין נשאר מהנסים שהיו בירושלים שלא אמר אדם לחבירו צר לי המקום כי בבית הכנסת שבירושלים הם צריכים לאנשי המקום כל השנה ומתמלאת פה על פה בעת התקבץ שם בחג השבועות החוגגים יותר מג' מאות איש כלם הם נכנסים שם ויושבים רווחים כי עדיין היא בקדושתה וזה סימן גאולה שלישית.

Even as recently as this past year, we experienced a similar feeling. After

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2 See also the Gemara in Sanhedrin 7a that makes a similar comment about emotional space:

הוא דהוה קאמר ואזיל: כי רחימתין הוה עזיזא - אפותיא דספסירא שכיבן, השתא דלא עזיזא רחימתין פוריא בר שיתין גרמידי לא סגי לן.

"When the love between my wife and I was strong, we were able to lie together on the blade of a sword. But when our love was weak, there was not enough room for us to lie together even in a bed of sixty amos."

3 There are numerous sources in חז"ל that support this idea, a clear one being the notion of זומא in בן זומא ד:א who states: הלומד מכל אדם: איזהו חכם?

4 R' Simeon ben Zemah Duran, a leader of North African Jewry during the 14th–15th centuries.

having our shuls closed and then reopened, we felt a certain *simcha* at being back together, engaging in *tefillah* and *limud haTorah* as a *kehilla*. Previous concerns, dislikes, or irritations that we might have had before our shuls were shut down paled in comparison to the wonderful and uplifting feeling of community, of finally being together, in person, united in our service of Hashem.

Over the *Yomim Noraim* season, the sense of *tzibbur* is more pronounced than the rest of the year. In one of the most passionate parts of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur davening, ונתנה תוקף, we say וחותם

יד כל אדם בו, which does not simply mean “I control my *own* book,” but rather that the signature of every single person with whom I have ever interacted or on whom I have ever had some kind of impact is also in my book.

It is when we experience the togetherness, the interaction, the give and take between us, the making room for others in our lives, both physically and mentally, that we realize that coming together as a ציבור is the most powerful tool we have. Creating and existing in that “crowded” space is truly a gift and a miracle.

# Halachic Insights on the Lulav

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**T**he *Gemara*<sup>1</sup> says that the spine of the *lulav* must be four *tefachim* tall so that it protrudes a *tefach* beyond the *hadasim* and the *aravos*. Whereas some of the *lulav's* requirements are only relevant on the first day of Yom Tov, this *halacha* applies equally to all the days of Sukkos.<sup>2</sup>

The *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>3</sup> cites the opinion that it is not good enough for the spine to be a mere four *tefachim* tall; rather it must actually protrude a *tefach* beyond the tip of the *hadasim* and *aravos*. Thus, if the *hadasim* and *aravos* were to be four *tefachim* tall, for example, the *lulav* would have to be five *tefachim* tall, and so on.

Many authorities rule in accordance with this opinion and imply that without the requisite protrusion one would not fulfil the mitzva even *bedieved*.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the *lulav's*

spine should protrude beyond the rest of the *minim* approximately four inches (according to the *Chazon Ish*) or 3.15 inches (according to R' Chaim Naeh).

(*Bedieved* a smaller size of a *tefach* can be relied upon, accordingly a protrusion of approximately 3.3 inches (*Chazon Ish*) or 2.62 inches (R' Chaim Naeh) would suffice).<sup>5</sup>

Some things to be aware of are:

a) If the *koishelach* (*lulav* holder) holding the *hadasim* and *aravos* is not fastened tightly in place, it will very easily slide upwards rendering the *lulav pasul* according to these *poskim*. Before you say the *bracha*, *Halel* or *Hoshanos*, it is best to ensure that the *koishelach* is appropriately placed low down on the body of the *lulav*.

b) Bear in mind that the tip of the *lulav's* leaves protrudes a few inches

1 סוכה לב, ב

2 שו"ע או"ח סי' תרמט סעיף ה

3 סי' תרנ סעיף ב

4 ראה שו"ע הרב שם סעיף ב. ערוך השלחן שם סעיף ג. וראה המצויין בפסקי תשובות שם במהדורה החדשה (יצא לאור שנת תשפ"א) הערות 9, 10 ו 11.

5 ראה משנ"ב שם סק"ז וסק"ח.

beyond the tip of its spine. It is the actual spine of the lulav that should protrude a *tefach*. To accomplish this, it is perfectly permissible, and sometimes necessary, to trim a few inches off the bottoms of the *hadassim* and the *aravos* (provided of course that they maintain their minimum size of three *tefachim*).

It is interesting to note that if one were to pick up each of the *arba minim* one after another, although not ideal, one would fulfill the mitzva.<sup>6</sup> What emerges then, perhaps somewhat ironically, is that if one were to remove the *hadassim* and *aravos* from their *koishelach* and pick them up after having put down the *lulav*, that would suffice. But leaving them in the *koishelach*, if it is raised too high, could disqualify the mitzva.

The *halacha* is that the *lulav* is to be held in one's right hand and the *esrog* in one's left hand<sup>7</sup> (and vice-versa for someone who is left-handed).<sup>8</sup> The *halacha* that they be held with two hands is so integral that if one held them both in one hand one would be required to do the mitzva

again.<sup>9</sup> If someone only has one arm (G-d forbid), rather than hold them both in one hand, he is to hold the *lulav*, put it down and then pick up the *esrog*.<sup>10</sup>

An often-overlooked detail is that whenever one is holding the *arba minim*, be it for the primary mitzva, for *Halel* or for *Hoshanos*, they should be held with two hands.<sup>11</sup>

Most people find it difficult to say the *Hoshanos* by heart just by repeating the words after the *shliach tzibur*. Many people use one hand to hold their *siddur* or *machzor* and are left holding the *arba minim* in only one hand. A possible solution is to use a 'Hoshanos card' that can be held between one's fingers or strapped around one's wrist and have both hands free to hold the *arba minim*. Be that as it may, for the duration of *Halel* and for the sections of the *Hoshanos* prayers that one is standing at one's place, one should be careful to hold the *arba minim* with two hands.

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6 סי' תרנא סעיף יב

7 שם סעיף ב

8 רמ"א שם סעיף ג

9 שו"ע הרב שם סעיף א, משנ"ב שם סקט"ו

10 שו"ע הרב שם סעיף טו, משנ"ב שם סקט"ג

11 מג"א שם סק"ו. שו"ע הרב שם סעיף יג. משנ"ב שם סקט"ו. וראה גם בביאור הגר"א ריש סי' תרס שצ"ן לילקוט שמעוני תהלים סי' תשג, וז"ל: "וכיצד הוא סדר ההקפה כל ישראל גדולים וקטנים נוטלים את לולביהם בידיהם הימנית ואתרוגייהם בידיהם השמאלית ומקיפין".

# “Take and Shake:” The Mitzvah of Na’anuim on Sukkot

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One of my earliest memories as a child was watching my grandfather assemble his *lulav* and *etrog*, as we prepared to walk to shul on Sukkot. I remember with all my senses the thrill of holding the *lulav* (and other *minim*) in my hands for the first time, reciting the *bracha*, and shaking them according to my Opa’s instructions. I had no awareness then that the mitzvah of waving the *lulav*, the *na’anuim*, was the subject of much *halachic* discussion.

Some of the questions raised include: Are the *na’anuim* part of the essential mitzvah of the *arba minim*, or just a *hiddur mitzvah* or *tosefet simcha* enacted to add beauty and joy? When does one do the *na’anuim*? How does one do the *na’anuim*?

As a child, all I knew was “take and shake.”

## Are the *Na’anuim* an essential part of the mitzvah?

The *Gemara* in *Sukka* (42a), states, *mide’agbehey nafak bey*, “the moment one picks up the *arba minim*, he has fulfilled the mitzvah.” This statement implies that the *na’anuim* are not part of the essential mitzvah. However, the

*Gemara* on the same *daf* teaches that a *katan* is obligated in this mitzvah as soon as he understands the *na’anuim*. And an earlier *Gemara* (37b) *darshans* that the *lulav* must be long enough to perform *na’anuim* with it. These two sources imply that the *na’anuim* are indeed part of the mitzvah of the *arba minim*. The question is, did *Chazal*, when they made their *takana*, include *na’anuim* as an essential requirement of the mitzvah or just as a *tosefet* or *shiyorey mitzvah*, an add-on to the mitzvah of *lulav*? There is much discussion among the *rishonim* and many differing opinions.

Rabbi Soloveitchik taught that according to the Rambam, it should be clear that *Chazal* established the *na’anuim* as part of the essential mitzvah. He based this on the Rambam in *Hilchot Lulav* (7:9) which reads, “And the fulfillment of the mitzvah as the law requires *-kehilchata-* [is as follows]: One should lift up the three species as they are bound together in one’s right hand and the *etrog* in one’s left hand. Then, one should pass (*u’na’aneiyah*) them back and forth, up and down, and wave/shake the *lulav* three times



in each direction.

According to the Rav, the *na'anuim* are part of the *kiyum hamitzvah* of the *arba minim*.

### **When does one shake the *lulav*?**

The *Mishna* (*Sukka* 37b) states that the *na'anuim* are to be performed during *Hallel*. This raises a question. If the *na'anuim* are part of the essential mitzvah, there should not be any time separation between taking the *arba minim*, making the *bracha*, and performing the *na'anuim*. The *Shulchan Aruch* addresses this issue (*Orach Chaim* 651:8). “One does the *na'anuim* at the time that he makes the *bracha* and again during *Hallel*.” The *Mishna Berura* adds, “Even when one takes hold of the *lulav* not at the time that he recites *Hallel*, he should wave it in all directions, even though he will take hold of it again during *Hallel*.”

Some have the custom to make the *bracha* on the *arba minim* in their *sukka* before *davening*, but the more prevalent *minhag* is to make the *bracha* and do the first set of *na'anuim* just before *Hallel*.

### **Where in *Hallel* are the *Na'anuim*?**

The *Mishna* teaches that the *na'anuim* were done while reciting the verses *Hodu Lashem* at the beginning and end of psalm 118 and while reciting *Ana Hashem Hoshia Na*. *Chazal* based this practice on these verses from *Divrei Hayamim* I: “Then all the forest trees will sing praises, before Hashem, for He has come to judge the

*earth*. Give thanks to Hashem for He is good, for His loving-kindness exists forever. And say, ‘Save us O G-d of our salvation...’ (16:33-35)

*L’maaseh*, we follow the Rama (*O.C.* 652:8) who states that the *chazan* waves while reciting *Hodu Lashem* and *Yomar Na* and the congregation waves while reciting all four *Hodu Lashem*’s. Both the *chazan* and the congregation wave while reciting *Ana Hashem Hoshia Na* twice and the last *Hodu Lashem* twice.

### **Does one wave or shake the *lulav*?**

The *Gemara* uses the phrase *molich u’mayvee* which literally means back and forth to describe the *na'anuim*. Some interpret this to mean that we “wave” the *lulav* by extending our arms back and forth. Others interpret the *Gemara* as requiring a physical “shaking” of the *lulav* branches.

### **Putting it all together.**

When doing the *na'anuim*, hold the *arba minim* opposite the heart. Wave/shake the *lulav* out and back three times pointing the *lulav* east, south, west, north, up, and down. We do not wave or shake the *lulav* when saying the name of Hashem.

### **A final thought.**

The *na'anuim* were enacted to enhance the *simcha* of *Sukkot* and to protect us from negative forces. They express our gratitude to Hashem by acknowledging His presence in every corner of our lives.

Wishing you all a *Chag Samayach*.

# Appreciating Hoshana Rabbah

Harav Yona Reiss  
Av Beth Din



## 1. The Origins of Hoshana Rabbah

The day of Hoshana Rabbah, which is the seventh and final day of the Sukkot holiday, is something of an enigma on the Jewish calendar. It is a day of Chol Hamoed, and yet also has elements of Yom Tov, particularly in its liturgy. It is not specifically mentioned in the Torah as a special day, and yet is endowed with special status.

Even the name of the day itself has had different versions. In addition to being called Hoshana Rabbah (see, e.g., *Yalkut Shimoni, Parshat Bechukosai*, paragraph 682; Rashi, *Sukkah* 55a, s.v. *iskin Amemar*; *Shulchan Aruch OC* 664), the seventh day of Sukkot is also alluded to in rabbinic literature as “*Yom Aravah*” (the day of the willow branch) [see *Tosafos Berachos* 34a s.v. *amar p’suka*], and “*Yom Chibut Chariyot*” (the day of the beating of the branches) (*Mishna Sukkah* 45a).

## 2. The Special Nature of the Day in the Beit Hamikdash

Based on the relevant Talmudic passages (see *Sukkah* 42b – 45a), it

seems that there were two special aspects to the observance of this special day during the time that the *Beit Hamikdash* was still standing:

(a) unlike the other days of Sukkot, when the altar was encircled one time, on Hoshana Rabbah the altar was encircled seven times, constituting seven *hakafot*;

(b) while there was a special service performed with a stand-alone *Aravah* or *Aravot* (willow branch or branches) on all the days of Sukkot, referred to in the Mishna as the “*mitzvah*” of *Aravah* (distinguishable from the *mitzvah* of Lulav which is also bound together with two *Aravah* branches as well as three *Hadassim*), this special *Aravah* service would not be performed on Shabbos, except when the seventh day (i.e., what we call Hoshana Rabbah) fell out on Shabbos, in which case it would be performed even on Shabbos as a demonstration of its Torah law status.

### 3. The Special Encircling of the Altar – with the Lulav or the Aravah?

Each one of these two special aspects of the day is subject to considerable debate and discussion both in the Talmud and in the Talmudic commentaries. With respect to the seven *hakafot* on the seventh day of Sukkot, one opinion in the Talmudic discussion (Sukkah 43b) held that the altar was only encircled by the Lulav together with the other four species (including on the other days when the altar was encircled only one time), while the other opinion held that the altar was encircled by the stand-alone *Aravah*.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Lulav*, 7:23) indicates agreement with the opinion that the altar was encircled by the *Lulav* alone, while the *Tur* (OC 664) seems to adopt the position that the altar was encircled by the *Aravah*, or possibly that it was encircled by both the *Lulav* and the stand-alone *Aravah* (*Bach*, ad locum). The *Sha'ar Hatzion* (664:7) records the different opinions regarding this dispute, without rendering a final judgment.

### 4. The Special Mitzvah of Aravah – How Many Aravot?

In terms of the number of *Aravah* branches for the special mitzvah of *Aravah*, the Talmud (44b) records a dispute amongst the *Amoraim* as to

whether it consisted of one branch or three branches.

The *halacha* is that one branch with one fresh leaf suffices for this purpose (Rambam, *Hilchos Lulav* 7:20), but that it is proper to take more branches, which should be as resplendent as possible, to adorn the Mitzvah (see Rema, *Orach Chaim* 664:4).

### 5. Standing Up the Aravot or Taking Them (or Both)

With respect to the exact nature of the special *Aravah* that was performed each day in the *Beit Hamikdash*, the Talmud records (*Sukkah* 43b) that according to one opinion the service simply consisted of “*Zekifah*,” the standing up by a *Kohen* of the *Aravah* branches on the side of the altar (see *Mishna Sukkah* 45a; Rashi 44a. s.v. *dilma*) while according to the other opinion the service consisted of “*Netilah*,” of the “taking” of the *Aravot* (by either the *Kohanim* alone, according to Rashi, *Sukkah* 43b s.v. *shluhei*, or all Jewish men, according to the Rambam, *Hilchos Lulav* 7:22) and possibly encircling the altar with it (according to the opinion that the altar was encircled by the *Aravah*). According to the Ritva (*Sukah* 44a, s.v. *u'parkinan Aravah*), all Jewish men would take the *Aravah*, while the *Kohanim* alone encircled the altar with it.

The Talmud (*Sukkah* 43b) indicates that, although the matter was subject to a dispute, the service of the *Aravah* indeed consisted of the taking (“*Netilah*”) of the *Aravot*. While the *Mishna* and *Gemora* (*Sukkah* 45a) explicitly describe the act of standing up 11-cubit tall *Aravah* branches (“*murbiyos*”) on the base of the altar (“*Zekifah*”), the *Tosafot* (ad locum, s.v. *zokfin*) explain that this took place following the taking (and according to *Tosafot*, encircling) of the *Aravot*, which was the core of the *Aravah* ritual in the *Beit Hamikdash*. According to the Rambam (*Hilchos Lulav* 7:22), the standing up of the *Aravot* against the altar took place before the taking of the *Aravot* (which did not include encircling in his opinion).

However, even if the standing up of the *Aravot* (*Zekifah*) did not comprise the entirety of the *Aravah* service, the Talmud notes that this practice was supported by the scriptural verse (*Tehillim* 118:27) that speaks about “*Isru Chag Ba’avotim Ad Karnot Hamizbeah*,” which is interpreted according to one opinion (*Sukkah* 45a) as connoting that the celebration of *Sukkot* included the act of affixing (*Isru*) the branches (*Avotim*) of the *Aravot* to overlay the horns (*Karnot*) situated on top of the holy altar. In fact, the Ritva explicitly writes (*Sukkah* 44a, s.v. *Amar Rav Yosef*)

that even the opinion that holds that the mitzvah of *Aravah* consisted of *Netilah* (taking of the *Aravah*), would agree that the mitzvah also included *Zekifah* (i.e., standing up of the *Aravot* on the altar).

According to the opinion of R. Yochanan ben Zakai recorded in the *Mishna* (*Sukkah* 45a), the propping of the branches was either performed exclusively upon palm tree branches (*Chariyot Shel Dekel*), or it was also performed upon palm tree branches in addition to the willow branches (see *Sukkah* 45a, and *Tosafot* s.v. *achat l’lulav*).

## **6. The Taking of the Aravah – Waving or Beating?**

In terms of the manner of *Netilah* (taking) of the *Aravot*, Rashi (*Sukkah* 43b, s.v. *ve’hevium*) writes that it consisted of waving the *Aravot* (*Na’anuim*), while according to the Rambam (*Hilchos Lulav* 7:22) it consisted of beating the *Aravot* into the ground, which is the common practice nowadays.

According to the opinion of R. Yochanan ben Zakai (*Sukkah* 45a), there was also a beating into the ground, but that beating was performed with palm tree branches on the side of the altar. Accordingly, he stated that the seventh day was called the day of “*chibut Chariyot*” (beating of palm tree branches).

## 7. The Mitzvah of Aravah as a Torah Obligation

Whichever way one understands the nature of the service of the *Aravah*, it was considered a Torah-mandated practice (see *Sukkah* 44a), either based on the verse (*Vayikra* 23:40) that speaks about taking the willow branches (“*Arvei Nachal*”) in addition to the *Lulav* (since this phrase is written in the plural, indicating that there is an obligation to have both the *Aravah* which is bound to the *Lulav* itself as well as a separate *Aravah* that is taken on a stand-alone basis), or based on it being a *Halacha L’Moshe Mi’Sinai* (oral law transmitted to Moses on Mount Sinai). The latter understanding is the generally accepted opinion (see Rambam, *Hilchos Lulav* 7:20).

The Talmud states (*Sukkah* 43b) that since the *Aravah* branches would be brought by the messengers of the *Bet Din*, there was no concern that anyone would carry it improperly in a public thoroughfare on Shabbos, so that the *Aravah* service could have been observed even on Shabbos. However, since the handling of the *Lulav*, also a Torah obligation, was only permitted on Shabbos when the first day of Sukkot fell out on Shabbos (otherwise, there was a decree forbidding the taking of the *Lulav* since one might come to carry his *Lulav* in a public thoroughfare

on Shabbos; on the first day, special arrangements were made to abate this concern since the obligation of *Lulav* on the first day is Biblically mandated even outside of the *Beit Hamikdash*), the *Aravah* was similarly only permitted to be handled on Shabbos for one day of the holiday in order not to denigrate the mitzvah of the *Lulav*. Since the *Lulav* was already permitted to be taken on Shabbos on the first day, the special day designated for the *Aravah* to be taken on Shabbos was moved to the opposite end of the holiday, namely the seventh day.

It should be noted that nowadays the *Lulav* is not taken on Shabbos even when it falls on the first day of Shabbos, because the Jews of the Diaspora, who observe two days of Yom Tov due to the doubt as to when the holiday would have been declared, cannot with certainty behave as if the first day is the first day of Sukkot (see *Sukkah* 43b-44a; *Tosafot* 43a, s.v. *lo yadinan*). It would follow that if the seventh day of Sukkot fell out on Shabbos nowadays, the mitzvah of *Aravah* would similarly not be observed (the *Gemora* in *Sukkah* 43b discusses this issue), but this point is rendered moot since the permanent Jewish calendar established by Hillel HaSheni (around 358 CE) precludes Hoshana Rabbah from ever falling out on Shabbos.

## 8. The Nature of the Practice of Taking the Aravah Nowadays – Minhag Nevi'im

The Talmud (*Sukkah* 44a-44b) clearly indicates that outside of the *Beit Hamikdash*, there is no Torah mandate to take the *Aravah*. In this sense, the mitzvah of *Aravah* differs from the taking of the *Lulav*, which remains a Torah-mandated mitzvah on the first day of Sukkot, even outside of the *Beit Hamikdash*, and thus even nowadays. By contrast, the Talmud (*Sukkah* 44a) teaches that the mitzvah of the *Aravah* outside of the *Beit Hamikdash* is only a rabbinic practice, which is either a *Yesod Nevi'im* (an enactment of the later prophets who prophesied during the beginning of the second Temple period) or a *Minhag Nevi'im* (a custom enacted by these later prophets). The conclusion of the Talmudic discussion (see *Sukkah* 44b) appears to be that the practice is only a *Minhag Nevi'im*, and therefore there is no blessing recited on the *Aravah* ritual nowadays (see Rambam, *Hilchos Lulav* 7:22).

Furthermore, the Talmud (*Sukkah* 44a) explains another major difference between the observance of the mitzvah of *Lulav* nowadays and the observance of the *Minhag Nevi'im* to take the *Aravah* nowadays. Since there still is a Biblical obligation outside of the *Beit*

*Hamikdash* to take the *Lulav* on the first day, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai decreed that the *Lulav* should still be taken all seven days of Sukkot as a remembrance of the mitzvah to take the *Lulav* for seven days in the *Beit Hamikdash*. However, since there was never a Torah commandment to take the *Aravah* outside of the *Beit Hamikdash* on any of the days of Sukkot, the observance of *Aravah* as a remembrance of the mitzvah in the *Beit Hamikdash*, based on the latter-day *Minhag Nevi'im*, is only observed nowadays on the seventh day of Sukkot, the day that we call Hoshana Rabbah, and not on the other days (see Rambam, *Hilchos Lulav* 7:22).

## 9. Practical Observance of Hoshana Rabbah Nowadays

As a matter of practical *halacha*, the Hoshana Rabbah service nowadays is observed in a special manner both with respect to the *Lulav* and the stand-alone *Aravot* that are only taken on this day. We circumnavigate the *bimah* seven times with the *Lulav* (in accordance with the Rambam's opinion, *supra* section 3, that the orbiting of the altar was only done with the *Lulav*; see Rema 664:7 and *Chayei Adam* 153:3), as opposed to the one orbit performed on the other days (other than Shabbos). During these seven circumnavigations with the *Lulav*, the extended *Hoshanot*

of the *hakafot* of Hoshana Rabbah are recited (see *Aruch Hashulchan* 664:7). Some people, however, follow the recommendation of the *Shulchan Aruch* to circumnavigate with both the *Lulav* and the *Aravah* to satisfy all opinions (see *Nefesh HaRav* p. 219-220).

The seven orbits around the *bimah* are likened by commentators (see *Tur OC* 660) to the seven circumnavigations of Jericho by our ancestors on the seventh day of encircling the city when we entered the land of Israel, after spending forty years in “*Sukkot*,” so this is especially appropriate on the seventh and final day of the *Sukkot* holiday (*Sefer HaToda’ah*). Perhaps the idea is that we similarly have prepared ourselves during the holiday season to confront and conquer the vagaries and vicissitudes of the world around us during the upcoming year.

Afterwards, we put down the *Lulav* and pick up the stand-alone *Aravot*, immediately prior to the recitation of the prayer “*Ta’aneh Emunim*.” Although the *halacha*, as previously mentioned (supra, Section 4), is in accordance with the opinion that one *Aravah* suffices for the special *Aravah* service (albeit with the understanding that taking more is preferable), the practice nowadays is to utilize five *Aravah* branches based on kabbalistic considerations

(*Mishna Berurah*, 664:16). Some have the practice of adorning the *Aravah* observance by taking “*murbiyos*,” the very tall *Aravot* branches that were utilized in the *Beit Hamikdash* (see Rashi, *Sukkah* 44b, s.v. *Aleh*, and *Chayei Adam* 153:3; supra, Section 5).

According to the Rema (*OC* 664:4) based upon the opinion of Rashi, supra, Section 6, we then wave these *Aravot* with some form of *na’anuim*. According to the *Aruch Hashulchan OC* 664:7, this waving need only be very slight in nature. However, others rule that the stand-alone *Aravot* should be waved in the same manner that we wave the *Lulav* (see *Nitei Gavriel, Sukkot* 79:2, n.5). While holding the *Aravot*, we recite various prayers relating to rainfall and prosperity (beginning with “*Ta’aneh Emunim*”), since the judgment for rainfall for the year is rendered on *Sukkot* (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a) and Hoshana Rabbah, as the final day of *Sukkot*, represents the time of the finalization of this judgment (*Mishna Berurah OC* 664:7). An important reason why we juxtapose the *Aravot* with the prayers for rain is because the *Aravot* grow on brooks of water (*Sefer HaToda’ah*). Some have the practice, adopted by Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, of also standing up the *Aravot* next to the *bimah*, or next to the *Shulchan* (table) upon which

the Sefer Torah is placed, prior to taking them, in commemoration of the *Zekifah* (standing up of the *Aravot* on the altar) that was part of the Temple service (see *Nefesh HaRav*, p. 220; *Eretz HaTzvi* p. 95, *Nitei Gavriel*, *Sukkah*, chapter 77, n.1, supra Section 5), and the Rambam's opinion (supra, Section 5) that *Zekifah* was performed prior to *Netilah*.

After the recitation of the various prayers, the *Aravot* are beaten five times into the ground, either right before *Kaddish* is recited, or in the middle of *Kaddish* before the recitation of *Tiskabel*, or after the conclusion of *Kaddish*. While the Talmud (*Sukkah* 44b) does not indicate that the beating of the *Aravot* into the ground was performed more than twice, the number of five times for the beating of the *Aravot* was also adopted based on kabbalistic considerations (*Mishna Berurah* 664:19). Additionally, we follow the practice recorded in the Talmud of having the "messengers of the Bet Din," or in this case the *shamashim*, or *gabbaim*, of the synagogue, bring the special *Aravot* to shul (see Rema, OC 664:2, supra, Section 7) for purposes of performing this mitzvah (which is observed nowadays as a *Minhag Nevi'im*).

Because the *Aravah* represents a person's mouth and symbolizes

those Jews who have neither Torah nor good deeds, one interpretation of the taking of the *Aravah* on Hoshana Rabbah is to emphasize, as we reach the end of the holiday and *Teshuva* period, that we recognize that we cannot achieve favor through our Torah or deeds alone without the power of our prayer (*Sefer HaToda'ah*). The beating of the *Aravot* into the ground also constitutes an expression of prayer that the mouths of the prosecuting angels be silenced (see *Yechaveh Da'at* 3:48).

## 10. Hoshana Rabbah as a Final Day of Judgment

The kabbalistic connection to Hoshana Rabbah is not limited to the number of *Aravot* taken or the number of times that the *Aravot* are beaten on the floor. The *Zohar* (*Parshat Tzav*, 31b-32a) famously describes how Hoshana Rabbah also constitutes on some level the "*siuma d'dina*," or the final day of judgment of the season of the Yomim Noraim, on which everyone's final "report cards" are issued from the Heavenly court (see also *Mishna Berurah*, 664:9). It is for this reason that it is customary for people to state "*piska tava*" or "*ah gut kvittel*" (meaning "a good card") to each other on this day. While our judgment may be written on Rosh Hashanah and sealed on Yom Kippur, it is not



delivered by the messengers of Hashem until the end of the Sukkot holiday, coinciding with the final judgment for the upcoming year's rainfall. Thus, it is still appropriate to pray for salvation on Hoshana Rabbah since even after a judgment is sealed by the court, it can always be adjusted until the time that it is delivered.

Since Hoshana Rabbah is thus viewed as a day of final judgment, there is a custom to stay up during the night of Hoshana Rabbah engaged in intensive Torah learning, including the Torah reading of *Sefer D'varim* (see *Aruch Hashulchan* 664:11). Additionally, the Hoshana Rabbah morning liturgy is much like Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, both in terms of its content and its melody, including in the recitation of the longer version of *Pesukei Dezimra*, and it is for this reason that the Chazzan customarily wears a *Kittel* (see *Shulchan Aruch OC* 664:1, *Aruch Hashulchan* 664:11-12).

Another connection with Hoshana Rabbah serving as the final "*yom hadin*" during the judgment period of the Yomim Noraim is the fact that it takes place on the twenty-first day of Tishrei, corresponding to the twenty-one generations from the time of the creation of the world until Avrohom Avinu began to spread the word of G-d and monotheism

to the rest of civilization. Thus, the number twenty-one represents the period that is given to us by Hashem (in fact, according to one *Midrashic* tradition, this special power of Hoshana Rabbah was communicated by Hashem directly to Avrohom) to harness the Divine light of the universe for good (see *Kaf Hachaim* 664:1). Others explain that the phrase "*Hosha-Na*" is an allusion to being rescued by Hashem on the day of "*Na*" which in *Gematria* is 51, representing Hoshana Rabbah which is the fifty-first day of the Teshuva season that begins on the first day of Elul (see *Kaf Hachaim*, *ibid*; *Ta'amei Haminhagim, Inyanei Lulav*, No. 811).

However, since Hoshana Rabbah also serves as the day of the culmination of the Sukkot festivities, the Mussaf service is sung to the tune of a regular Yom Tov service (*Aruch Hashulchan* *ibid.*). It is also customary to wish each other a "*gut yontif*" on this day (*ibid.*). According to the *Levush* (664:1), it is appropriate to demonstrate an extra measure of joy on this day, and he explains that for this reason there is a practice of removing the upper rings of the *Lulav*, so that the waving of the *Lulav* can be more festive. The *Aruch Hashulchan* (664:13) adds that it is appropriate to have a special festive meal on Hoshana Rabbah.

At the same time, since Hoshana Rabbah is not actually a full-fledged Yom Tov, but still a day of Chol Hamoed, the prayers of *Nishmat* and *Shochen Ad* are omitted (Rema OC 664:1). Additionally, since it is Chol Hamoed, any work permitted on Chol Hamoed is permitted on this day as well, although there is a custom to minimize the performance of any *melachah* prior to the end of *davening* (see Rema 664:1).

Thus, Hoshana Rabbah ends up being an amalgamation of many different themes: (a) the seven circumnavigations of the *bimah* on this day with the *Lulav*, commemorating a similar service on this day with either the *Lulav* or *Aravah* (or both) in the *Beit Hamikdash*; (b) the taking and beating of the *Aravot* on this day, serving as a commemoration of this service in the *Beit Hamikdash*, and the custom of the prophets established at the time of the Second Temple period for this to be performed even outside of the *Beit Hamikdash* proper on the seventh day of Sukkot; (c) the final day of judgment, akin to Yom Kippur; (d) a quasi-Yom Tov day; and (e) the last day of Chol Hamoed.

Because of the hybrid nature of the day, Hoshana Rabbah is one of the days on the calendar (the others are Purim and Erev Yom Kippur)

in which there is a custom to eat *kreplach* (see *Nitei Gavriel, Sukkot*, 80:5), which consists of meat “hidden” inside of dough, indicating that the festive and awesome nature of the day is “hidden” inside one of the days of Chol Hamoed.

## **11. Why is the day called Hoshana Rabbah?**

The name itself of Hoshana Rabbah (literally meaning the “great Hoshana”) is primarily a reference to the additional “*Hoshanos*” prayers that are recited on this day during the seven-times of encircling of the *bimah*, which call for the salvation of Hashem in every aspect of our lives, including our physical and spiritual existence (see *Moadim B’Halacha, Sukkot*, p. 146, *Kaf Hachaim*, *ibid.*). This is especially fitting for a day that constitutes the final delivery of G-d’s judgment for the upcoming year. Others (see *Levush* 664:1) view the name Hoshana Rabbah as another version of the appellation “*Yom Ha’aravah*” (*supra*, Section 1) in the sense that the word *Hoshana* serves as an allusion to the branches of the willow tree taken on this day (see, e.g., Rema 664:4), and the word *Rabbah* serves as a reference to the fact that these branches are “greater” than usual insofar as they are taken in addition to the regular *Aravot* that are bound together with the *Lulav* (the *Levush* also adds that this day

has a higher level of holiness than the others due to its comparison to Yom Kippur).

Ultimately, there is a special spark to the day of Hoshana Rabbah that emanates from both its *Beit Hamikdash* origins and its mystical significance. It is the day that contains all the shades of the upcoming holiday season, enabling us both to re-experience the awe and majesty of Yom Kippur and to rejuvenate our Yom Tov spirit. The seven *hakafot* with the *Lulav*, combined with the special waving and beating of the *Aravot*, remind us of our dependence upon Hashem

for salvation, and our need to cleanse ourselves from our shortcomings as we complete our heartfelt prayers of the Teshuva season. Hoshana Rabbah glows with an intensity of passion and persistence that sends a message to the Heavenly messengers bearing our final decree that we will use every fiber of our strength to negotiate a “*piska tava*” for the new year. May we all merit to receive clean bills of physical and spiritual health from the Heavenly tribunal and continue to grow stronger throughout this year and future years in our service and devotion to Hashem.



# שבת הארץ

בס"ד

## CHICAGO RABBINICAL COUNCIL MONTHLY SHEMITTAH NEWSLETTER

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The cRc is proud to present a monthly newsletter series on *shemittah*.  
Each edition will feature Rabbi Dovid Cohen as well as one of the cRc Rabbis.

### Introduction to Shemittah

by Rabbi Dovid Cohen

Administrative Rabbinical Coordinator, cRc Kosher

The Torah has a 7-year agricultural cycle, and the last year of that cycle – called *Shemittah* – has special mitzvos associated with it. The year 5782 (September 2021-September 2022) will be *Shemittah*, and the goal of this series will be to familiarize readers with the basic principles and issues, with particular focus on the applications that relate to those of us in *chutz la'aretz*.

Derech Emunah's introduction to *Hilchos Shemittah* records the following seven *halachos* of *Shemittah*, and we will IY"H address each of them in the coming installments:

- עבודת קרקע All work on the land or trees, both for planting or growing, is forbidden during *Shemittah*, and some is even forbidden before *Shemittah*.
- המקרי The mitzvah to consider all *Shemittah* produce as *asmuchas* so that others can partake from it.
- סמיכות Vegetables and seeds which grow during *Shemittah* are forbidden *midrabannan* even if they grew by themselves.
- המבד It is forbidden to do actions which ruin or waste *Shemittah* produce.
- מחנה The prohibition to perform certain forms of business with *Shemittah* produce.
- ביעור Once a given type of *Shemittah* produce is no

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### Israeli Produce During Shemittah

by Rabbi Yona Reiss

Av Beth Din, cRc

כי תבוא אל הארץ אשר אני נתן לכם ושבחתה הארץ שבת  
לך (ויקרא כהב)

"When you enter the land which I am giving you, the land shall rest, a Sabbath of Hashem." (Vayikra 25:2).

The Torah tells us that every seven years is the observance of *Shemittah*, a time when the land of Israel is given a rest. The story is told (see Torah Archives of Rabbi Frand, *Parshas Behar*) regarding the Ponevezer Rav that during a *Shemittah* year, he walked over to a tree in Israel, kissed the tree, and said, "Good Shabbos to you!" This is a time in which we not only desist from work upon the land, but a time in which it is appropriate to express appreciation for Hashem's gift to us of the land of Israel altogether.

Chazal teach us (see Berachos 5a) that the land of Israel is a gift that is acquired through *סיווי* – painful challenges. To the extent that leaving the land fallow presents its potential hazards, as the Torah records through the people's concern – "מה נאכל בשנה השביעית – what will we eat during the seventh year?" (Vayikra 25:20) – this may represent a form of *סיווי* that enables us to earn the right to the magnificent land of Israel. Concomitantly, the Torah clearly states that exile from the land is a direct consequence of not keeping the *Shemittah* laws properly (Vayikra 26:35).

It is particularly daunting for Jewish farmers in Israel to keep the *Shemittah* laws in accordance with the multitudinous

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Coming Erev Shabbos  
Mevarchim Chodesh Cheshvan!  
The second issue of the cRc  
Shemittah Newsletter