

in Your right hand for eternity,” for G-d will always be at our side so that we refrain from sinning or do anything other than obey His laws.

To go into more detail, we may add that the four species allude to various degrees of Torah study and the service of G-d. As we have already said, the etrog alludes to the Torah, meaning to the written Torah (the word etrog evokes tariag – 613, the number of mitzvot in the Torah). The lulav in itself alludes to the life of Torah, and the word hadas has the same numerical value as sod (“secret”), which alludes to the secrets of the Torah and the oral Torah. Above all, the aravah alludes to the sweetness and appeal of the Torah.

We thus fully understand why it is during Sukkot that we invite the holy Ushpizin (Zohar III:103a). It is because during the three months of Elul and the holidays of Tishri, we evoke the merit of the Patriarchs, awakening Divine mercy upon ourselves through their merit. Hence afterwards we do not forget them, and during Sukkot we invite them into the Sukkah in order to show them that they defended us for good reason, since we accomplish what we have promised to do: We incline in the shade of the Sukkah, we take the four species, and we connect ourselves to the Torah and its appeal.

This is why we invite only seven Ushpizin, a number that corresponds to the seven days preceding Yom Kippur (between the end of Rosh Hashanah and the start of Yom Kippur). It may also be that this contains an allusion, for the word Elul plus the nine days of Teshuvah (outside of Yom Kippur itself, which is not included) has the numerical value of 76. Furthermore, the initials of the seven shepherds – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph, and David – also have the numerical value of 76. This is why we invite them to defend us and plead our case.

Concerning this subject, I saw in the Chiddushei HaRim of Ger that when a man enters the Sukkah, it is considered as if he has performed all the mitzvot of the Torah. This is quite understandable considering what we have said, for the Sukkah alludes to humility before G-d, and as we know the Torah is acquired through humility (Perkei Avoth 6:6; Taanith 7a). In addition, during Sukkot we take the four species – the etrog alluding to the 613 mitzvot, the lulav to life, the hadas to the secrets of the Torah, and the aravah to the Torah’s sweetness. Therefore during Sukkot it’s as if we took it upon ourselves to perform all the mitzvot of the Torah, for we take the etrog in our left hand,

thus breaking the kelipah (impurity) found on the left, and we strengthen ourselves in the Torah and its 613 mitzvot.

The book HaKountrass by the Satmar Rebbe also asks why we take the lulav precisely during Sukkot, rather than during another holiday. Furthermore, if I may pose the question, why do we celebrate Sukkot precisely after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur? In my humble opinion, it is because in our prayers we are primarily asking G-d to give us a long and good life, and that He forgives our sins. This is why He asks us, after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, to perform a deed that favorably evokes our memory before Him.

This deed involves the Sukkah, for as we have said the Sukkah alludes to humility before G-d. Someone who sins during the entire year is as if he became boastful before G-d. Now as we know, G-d cannot live with such a person (Sotah 5a), as it is written: “Every haughty heart is the abomination of the L-RD” (Proverbs 16:5) and also, “One with haughty eyes and an expansive heart, him I cannot bear” (Psalms 101:5). This is why words and thoughts are not enough; repentance also requires action – an act of submission. Thus when we build a Sukkah and enter it, we demonstrate our humility before G-d.

This is the meaning of the Sukkah: When we leave our homes and enter into the Sukkah, we show that we are leaving our pride and moving towards humility, which brings about the forgiveness of our sins. If we also want a long life, G-d commands us to connect to the lulav, whose numerical value is that of the word chaim (“life”) as well as to the other species, for even an ordinary person who is lacking integrity can repent. This is why we attach the lulav to the Sukkah, and also why we shake it, for in this way we also shake our accusers and rid ourselves of them until Hoshana Rabba, when we are definitively inscribed for a good life.

In reflecting upon this, we understand the difference between Yom Kippur and Hoshana Rabba: On Yom Kippur we mortify ourselves by fasting, and on Hoshana Rabba we mortify ourselves by not sleeping (since we do not sleep on that night). Now as we know, food, drink, and sleep are great pleasures, ones that enable us to live. Thus when we distance ourselves from them, it’s as if we annulled the physical for the sake of the spiritual, an act that draws us toward eternal life.

IN MEMORY OF THE TZADIKIM

RABBI ALEXANDER MOSHE LAPIDOT

We may say without exaggeration that among the thousands of Bnei Torah living in the world today, there are perhaps only a few hundred who are aware of the fact that a Rav by the name of Rabbi Alexander Moshe lived in Lithuania more than a century ago – a Gaon in a generation of Gaonim and Tzaddikim. Living in the same era as Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan and Rabbi Israel of Salant, Rabbi Alexander Lapidot was considered a Torah genius and was completely refined in heart and mind. He was also a very eloquent orator and a prolific writer.

Rabbi Alexander Moshe was born to Rabbi Tzvi Lapidot on Adar 2, 5579 (1819). From his early youth he was known for his exceptional intelligence and great diligence. At a very young age he went to study Torah in Salant, where he pursued courses given by the great Gaon of his generation, Rabbi Tzvi Broida. There he encountered Rabbi Israel, the founder of the Mussar movement, and bonded with him in a friendship that would last their entire lives. He recounted that during his studies in Salant, when Rabbi Israel was the Rosh Yeshiva there, he studied tractate Nezikin with his students. When Rabbi Israel finished the tractate, Rabbi Tzvi sent his student Alexander Moshe to listen to Rabbi Israel's final course on the subject, and he then asked him to repeat everything that he had heard.

A prominent individual from the city of Yanova (near Kovno) heard people speaking highly of Rabbi Alexander Moshe, and so he took as his son-in-law.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook, the Rav of Jerusalem, recounts that when he met Rabbi Alexander Moshe (who was the Rav of Rassein at the time), Rav Alexander was speaking with his fiancée. He told her, "You should realize that what people say about me – that I know how to study – is an exaggeration. I know far less than what people think. And what they say about my fear of Heaven – that too is a great exaggeration. As for those who say I'm modest, they have absolutely no idea how filled I am with arrogance." She listened to these remarks and said, "But it's not possible that you have no virtues whatsoever. Tell me which." Rabbi Alexander Moshe replied, "Yes, I do have one virtue: I am a man of truth. This is why you should realize that everything I've said up to now is absolutely true."

After his marriage, Rabbi Alexander Moshe went to live with his father-in-law, who provided for his needs (which was the norm for Torah scholars at that time). There he studied Talmud and the Poskim with great diligence.

He was first appointed as the Rav and Av Beit Din of Yanova, then after a few years he went to live in a suburb on the other side of the river, in the city of Grodno. From there he went to Rassein, where he remained as Rav and Av Beit Din until his last days some 40 years later.

With Rabbi Alexander Moshe's arrival in Rassein, a new era began in his life. His fame spread to the far reaches of the land, and letters from numerous countries were addressed to him, ones that were filled with various questions and which he answered by the power of his Torah. He assisted Rabbi Israel of Salant in setting up kollels in Kovno and the surrounding areas, and he participated with him in various conferences whose goal was the establishment of kollels as well as other community activities. When Rabbi Tzvi Broida published his book *Etz Pri* to draw support for kollels, he included articles by Rabbi Israel and Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan, as well as an introduction and large article written by Rabbi Alexander Moshe.

In his article, Rabbi Alexander Moshe expressed the idea that one must find the happy medium, be it in the fear of Heaven or in character traits, according to what the Rambam recommends in *Shemonah Perakim*, and contrary to the opinion of non-Jewish thinkers. He warned against putting too much emphasis on any given point, "for just as the wicked risks by nature to infringe upon the prohibition against taking away from mitzvot, there are some people who risk transgressing the prohibition of adding to mitzvot, and to destroy the world by this exaggerated virtue." This is why, Rabbi Alexander Moshe explained, character traits are called *midot* (literally "measures"), for they must be measured (*medudot*), weighed, and calculated.

In his city of Rassein there was also a branch of kollels under his direction, and there he gave courses in Mussar according to the style of his Rav and friend, Rabbi Israel of Salant. The following account is given by Rabbi Gedalia Silverstone, the Rav of Washington, in his book *Lev Avot*: "I heard the Gaon Rabbi Alexander Moshe Lapidot explain the words of the Sages in tractate *Berachot* ('A man must always "annoy" his good inclination over his evil inclination') as follows: What does the word 'annoy' mean? If the evil inclination comes to incite you to commit a sin, do not plead with him to mercifully leave you in peace, for in that case you will certainly fall into his hands, since he knows no pity. On the contrary, you should exhibit great anger and say to him: 'Get away from me, you rasha, for you are trying to take my soul and destroy me for eternity!' This is the sense of the word 'irritate' – with anger."

Rabbi Alexander Moshe educated many great students, among them being the Gaon Rav Chanoch Henich of Vilna and the Rav of Chaslovich, the Gaon Rabbi Meir Stalivitz (who near the end of his life became the Rav of the Zichron Moshe district of Jerusalem). Rabbi Alexander Moshe was also known as a "lover of Zion," and he wrote articles in which he shared his views on settling in Eretz Israel and the goal of the "Lovers of Zion" movement. Among other things, he wrote: "All that we want is solely to create a group of farmers who will work the earth, firmly settled in Eretz Israel, to which we are connected by thousands of years of history and which was destined to us by G-d through the intermediary of the holy prophets. It is a very great mitzvah to settle there."

Rabbi Alexander Moshe helped Rabbi Nathan Tzvi Finkel (the Alter of Slabodka) establish the Knesset Israel yeshiva there, and in a certain way it was he who "discovered" the Alter of Slabodka. At the beginning of his career, Rabbi Nathan Tzvi went from time to time into the surrounding cities to speak to the public, once coming back to his hometown of Rassein and speaking there. The Rav of the city (Rabbi Alexander Moshe) came to listen to his lecture, and he found this young man filled with wisdom and knowledge. He immediately sent a letter to Rabbi Simcha Zissel, a Mussar great, to ask him to take care of the young man and steer him on the right course. Later on, this young man – the Alter of Slabodka, as he would later be known – became one of the greatest teachers of Mussar.

In 5657 (1897), Rabbi Alexander Moshe published a book on research and faith entitled *Avnei Zikaron*. In addition, we have many manuscripts containing his responsa on Halachah and Aggadah. Rabbi Alexander Moshe lived to the age of 87. He passed away on Adar 10, 5666 (1906).

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

The Value of Family Life

There was once a king who possessed a very special map of all the countries and cities of interest to him. The map clearly showed every state and even the smallest villages of each state, including each hidden footpath and every bridge. With the help of this map, it was easy to conquer any country he wished, which is why it was extremely valuable to him and also why he guarded it preciously.

This king had an only son, and one day the map ended up in the boy's hands. Unfortunately for the king, the boy tore the map into shreds, which he mangled into a heap of paper. The king was grieved when he saw this, and he fell into despair, wondering what he was going to do. Seeing his father's sadness, the boy promised that he would glue all the pieces of the map back together again in the right order, making it as complete as before and without missing a thing.

The boy kept his promise. He worked hard to glue all the pieces back together in their exact place, and finished by handing his father a map as perfect in detail as at the beginning. Nothing was missing, to the very last feature. Greatly surprised by this, the king asked his son, "How did you manage to find the wisdom to do this – the key to putting each of the small pieces of paper back together again in their exact place?"

The boy answered, "I saw that on the other side of the map was an image of a man, and I told myself that I had only to look at the other side to put each piece back in its exact location. When the image of the man would be pieced back together, then the map on the other side and everything that it contained would be pieced back together at the same time."

And so it is with the map of the world, the map of family life, which is torn and ruined. Gluing back the pieces and making the world and life itself perfect – so that pain and tragedy no longer exist – this we cannot do. However what we can do is to heal man and work to better him, with the goal of aspiring to perfection, and then everything will fall into place. The world will then be complete, family life will be perfected, and all tears will disappear from the horizon. This is the only way to accomplish it.

– Bayit Nééman

THE STORY OF THE WEEK

The Tzaddikim hear nothing in vain

This story occurred before Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli became famous. During that time, he wandered from town to town and no one was aware of his identity or how great he was.

One day towards evening, as he was sitting in the Beit Midrash of one of the towns in his self-imposed exile, a woman entered and asked if anyone had seen her husband.

Her husband had apparently left her and journeyed to parts unknown, and the poor woman had remained an agunah. Now she wanted to free herself and had decided to go to every town and village of the land to look for her husband. Everywhere she went, she gave people a description of her husband and asked if they had seen him. When Rabbi Zusha heard the woman's question, he arose, turned towards her, and said, "Go to the guests' synagogue. There you will find your husband." The women rushed to the synagogue, and she in fact found her missing husband there!

All the inhabitants of the town considered this to be a miracle. How did Rabbi Zusha know that the woman's husband would be there, for his feet had never ventured inside the guests' synagogue! "It's surely a miracle!" they said among themselves.

"No, there is nothing miraculous about this," Rabbi Zusha hurried to explain. "It was something else. This morning I heard two people speaking to one another, and one of them said that someone new had come to the guests' synagogue. I was surprised when I heard this, and I asked myself why this rumor had reached me. Why had my ears registered something that I had absolutely no interest in?"

I was still thinking about this when a woman entered the Beit Midrash and asked if anyone had seen her husband. It was then that I immediately understood that her husband was certainly the person whom the two people had been speaking about."

Those present then understood that it wasn't a miracle after all, but rather a sign of Rabbi Zusha's great piety, a man who was in their very midst. Since he was very careful not to pronounce G-d's Name in vain, he always distanced himself from frivolous rumors and was careful not to listen to useless remarks. Only a man of his worth merited that Heaven should send him rumors that were of practical use.