

On Hoshana Raba, the Satmar Rebbe used to give the following דבר תורה to his קהילה. Once a year, a mighty ruler would visit all of the cities of his realm, rewarding the loyal citizens and punishing the rebellious. The clever people would come out and welcome the ruler at the city gate, bow down to him, and ask forgiveness for any offenses they had committed. He would graciously pardon them.

The simple-minded would wait for the ruler to enter the city square before asking him to overlook their failings. The ruler graciously pardoned them too. The fools waited until the ruler was about to leave. At the last moment before he left, they would come shamefacedly, prostrating themselves and begging for mercy.

Concluded the rebbe, everyone had reason to be ashamed because they came to the ruler seeking their own benefit, hoping to gain favor for themselves. But there were also those, not mentioned, who had come to salute the ruler, to praise him, honor him and exalt him. They came for his sake. This is why we start the davening on Hoshana Raba with the words למענך אלקינו - For your sake Hashem, we come and we daven to you. Not for us, but for you.

What do we do on Hoshana Raba? We take the הושענות and we beat them on the ground. We know that the דרשה represents those who don't have any מדות and don't have any תורה. But there's an interesting דרשה here from a sefer called תולעת יעקב. We know that the different parts of the ארבע מינים resemble different parts of our body. The ערבות look like our lips. So we can look at it that these are the lips of the מלאכים attempting to accuse us in the בית דין של מעלה. By beating the הושענות, we say "Hashem, don't listen to these words. Please instead listen to our davening, not to their davening. We want all of the unfavorable מדות and verdicts to be struck down and we should have a very excellent, good year."

In addition to that, what do we do with the הושענות after we beat them down? We know that the תשובה is done in one of two ways. There's תשובה מיראה and there's תשובה מאהבה. If it's מיראה, his זדונות are like שגגות. If it's מאהבה, his זדונות now is like מצות. So we take the הושענות and we show Hashem, "Hashem, we're doing תשובה. We're taking these עבירות and we're going to put them up on top of the ארון קודש. We're not going to mistreat them. We've done a מצוה with these. We want you to consider these as מצות."

