

סוכות SUKKOT

On the first day you shall take the fruit of hadartrees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.

LEVITICUS 23:40



The Four Species: Pursuing Justice With Body and Spirit

Year after year, we hold the Four Species in our hands. They are fragrant and familiar and remind us of the agricultural roots of the festival of Sukkot. A midrash in Vayikra Rabbah (30:12) seeks to unearth deeper meaning by pairing each of the Four Species with a part of our bodies. As we reflect on the midrash and shake the Four Species in service to God, we are reminded of the importance of using our bodies in service to humankind.

The *hadass*, a bough from a myrtle tree, represents the human eye. As we wave it in front of us, let us break down the barriers we have erected so that we may truly begin to see and recognize the suffering of others.

The *aravah*, a leafy branch from a willow tree, represents the human mouth. As we wave it at our sides, let us locate our voices loud and strong so that we may speak out against inequity of all kinds.

The *lulav*, a frond from a date palm, represents the human spine. As we wave it high, let us draw on our strength and resilience, and stand tall together against oppression.

The *etrog*, a fruit from the citron tree, represents the human heart. As we wave it low, let us reach into the wellspring of our compassion so that we may open our hearts to all the inhabitants of our world.

As we join the Four Species together in our hands, let us unite as a community and use our collective vision, voice, power and compassion to confront injustice.

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