



# TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Sukkos 5783

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## A Taste of Torah

### Four-sight

by Rabbi Yossi Ephrathi

On Sukkos we are commanded by the Torah to take four items that grow from the ground - an esrog, *lulav* (palm branch), *hadassim* (myrtles) and *aravos* (willows) - and shake them. Why do we take specifically these Four Species? Is there something unique about them?

The Medrash teaches that the esrog is edible and has a pleasant fragrance. This symbolizes the *tzaddik* (righteous person) who has the “taste” of good deeds and the “fragrance” of Torah learning. A *lulav* is an unopened branch from a date tree. Dates are edible but do not offer fragrance. This represents Jews who are on a somewhat lower level; they excel in mitzvah fulfillment but are not great in Torah study. *Hadassim* possess a wonderful aroma but provide no taste. This is the Jew who studies Torah but whose mitzvah performance is not up to par. And, finally, the *aravos*. They have no taste or smell. This is the simple, ignorant Jew who doesn't excel in Torah study nor in mitzvah performance.

We bind these Four Species together to remind ourselves that Hashem loves us when we're all together, regardless of which category a Jew may fall into. We shake the Four Species up and down and in the four directions, east, west, north, and south, to bring Hashem's blessings from all directions and to ward off harm. A unified nation will be showered with blessing by G-d, because we complete each other and become whole when we stand together.

The Torah, after giving the commandment to take these Four Species, continues that we should rejoice before G-d. This joy following the taking of these four items,

representing the unity of the Jewish Nation, indicates that our Nation can be truly happy when it's unified.

The Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter; 1847-1905) notes that on Sukkos, we pray for water, because the abundance of water we will receive for the coming year is judged by Hashem on Sukkos. Where does water come from? It comes from the highest of places, the heavens, as rain. It also comes from the lowest and deepest of places, from groundwater such as springs and wells. Hashem will grant us water and sustain us, says the Sfas Emes, when we all pray together - from the highest, most prestigious Jew to the seemingly lowliest, simplest Jew.

The Medrash teaches another symbolism of these Four Species. The tall, proud *lulav* symbolizes the spine. Leaves of *hadassim* look like eyes. The *aravos* are similar to lips. An esrog resembles the heart. When we hold these four together, we are telling G-d, “We focus the entirety of our bodies toward You.”

The Sifsei Kohen (Rabbi Mordechai HaKohein; 1523-1598) expands upon the message of this Medrash. When the Torah says to take an esrog for a mitzvah, it's telling us to take our heart and give it over to G-d, meaning to purify our thoughts and make them subservient to Him. The Torah refers to *lulav* as “*kapos timarim*” (date palm branches). The word *kapos* can also be read as *kafus*, or bent, teaching us that one should bend his spine in humility. *Hadassim*, representing eyes, remind us to look away from anything inappropriate. *Aravos* are similar to lips, and holding them helps us keep

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## Stories for the Soul

### Home is Where the Heart Is

A man once came to the Brisker Rov (Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik; 1886-1959) with a dilemma. His aged mother lived in a town far from Brisk, and he was unable to care for her properly. He wanted the Brisker Rov to convince his mother to relocate to Brisk, where he lived, so that he'd be in close proximity.

The Brisker Rov tried to convince the woman, but she adamantly refused. When pressed as to the reason for her refusal, she related the following tale about her parents:

My parents were getting on in years, and had always been very poor. But they had one dream: To purchase their own set of the Four Species for Sukkos. For years, they saved a bit here and there, one *kopek* at a time, until, one year as Sukkos approached, they decided they had enough money to fulfill their dream. They went to the city and dumped their hard-earned savings before the merchant, who promptly informed them that they did not have nearly enough to purchase even a simple set.

As my disappointed parents returned to their home, my father turned to my mother and said, “We're getting on in years, and our children are all married. We don't need such a large home. Let's sell it, rent a small apartment, and use the money for the Four Species.” My mother readily agreed, and they quickly made the arrangements. They headed back to the merchant, who now sold them a beautiful *esrog* along with the other three parts of the set.

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## Kollel Happenings

### TALMUDO BIYADO GEMARA CLUB FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS

Learn, review, and acquire a masechta! Boys in grades 6-8 are invited to join Rabbi Chaim Gross at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center/Ohel Yissochor weeknights Mon.-Thu. from 8-8:30 pm for a Gemara shiur followed by review. Contact Rabbi Nesanel Kipper at [rnk@denverkollel.org](mailto:rnk@denverkollel.org) for further details.

### BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

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### A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Tuesday nights on Zoom, 8:15-9 pm, for men and women.

## Halacha Riddles

**Last week we asked:** If it flows, you may dip. If it's still, you will need more. What is this?

**Answer:** Water for *netilas yadayim*. One may dip his hands into a flowing body of water (as long as the majority of water is from groundwater, not rainwater) for the purpose of washing hands before eating bread, regardless of how much water is present (as long as the hands can be fully immersed at one time). However, if the water is not flowing, one may only dip his hands inside if the water has the status of a *mikvah*, a body of still water contained in the ground. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 159:14), whose opinion is generally followed by

Sefardim, cites a dispute whether the *mikvah* must contain a volume of at least 40 *se'ah* (opinions vary on the modern-day equivalent of 40 *se'ah*, ranging from 303 to 964 liters) or if mere full immersion of the hand suffices, and rules leniently. However, the Rema (ad loc.) (generally followed by Ashkenazim) says one should be stringent and use only a *mikvah* that contains 40 *se'ah*. The Mishna Berura (ad loc.:85) says one may rely on the lenient opinion in extenuating circumstances, but the Bi'ur Halacha (ad loc.) s.v. *vayesh lihachmir*) concludes that if one has the opportunity, he should wash his hands again properly.

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra - Part X

Due to his great secular knowledge and poetic skill, Rabbi Avraham has been recognized by the secular world, as well. Famed Victorian-era British poet Robert Browning penned a poem titled "Rabbi ben Ezra" about the life of Rabi Avraham. In recognition of his astronomic contributions, there is a crater on the moon is named "Abenezra."

For Torah Jewry, however, Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra's impact lives through his numerous works of religious poetry, his many works on different areas of Torah, and, most notably, his commentary to the Torah. While he may have lived a difficult, tragic life, his Torah erudition is a beacon of light until this day.

## A Taste of Torah

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in mind the prohibition of speaking negatively about others or using vulgar speech.

When we take the Four Species this

Sukkos, we are fulfilling a mitzvah, but we are also connecting to a great deal of spiritual energy contained within these four items.

## Stories for the Soul

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Upon arriving home, my father left to work, and the neighbors, having heard of the magnificent *esrog*, came to see it. My mother took it out to show everyone, and, sure enough, it soon fell down, knocking off a piece and rendering it invalid!

When my father returned home, my mother had no choice but to inform him of the terrible news. But my father

calmly said, "Well, if one tried but ultimately does not have the means, one is exempt."

The woman tearfully concluded her tale, and said to the Brisker Rov, "The house my parents sold is in my town. Every time I pass that house, I am reminded of their great sacrifice to fulfill a mitzvah. How can I possibly leave my village?!"

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