

# Chagim uMoadim

— from the Masorti Movement



ד'ס"ט

## Sukkot

On the streets of Israel there is an air of excitement that precedes the festival of Sukkot. At Jerusalem's Machaneh Yehuda, on Rabin Square in Tel Aviv and in front of neighborhood supermarkets temporary stalls emerge before the festival selling the arba minim or Four Species of willow, myrtle, palm branches and citrons (etrog). Tables are piled high with branches and citrons while religious and nonreligious men and women search for the freshest branches and the loveliest etrogim to perform the Sukkot mitzvah of waving the lulav. Each purchase always includes a palm leaf to bind the branches together, the mitzvah is meaningless unless lulav is held as one.

The commandment to take the four species is found in the book of Leviticus: "On the first day you shall take the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days." (23:40) The esotericism of the mitzvah inspires the Sages to interpret its meaning. In one midrash they make an analogy between the arba minim and the various types of Jews. As each plant is characterized by different intensities of flavor and aroma, there are also a variety of personalities amongst the Jewish people.

The Jewish community has always been a place of lively debate; our openness and honesty is a cause for celebration. However, the liveliness of our dialogue at times deteriorates into vitriol and contempt. Perhaps this is why the midrash concludes: "let them all be tied together and they will atone for one another." This Sukkot as we wave our lulavim let's recall that we are connected with God in all dimensions and like the branches of the lulav we are also bound together with all of the Jewish people.

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