

Text for Sukkot

The Symbolism of the Lulav and Etrog

Text #1:

Designed for older students

Kaballah, Jewish mysticism, teaches that there are four types of Jews:

- ✦ The etrog, which possesses both taste and fragrance, symbolizes those who possess both learning and good deeds.
- ✦ The palm branches possess taste but no fragrance, symbolizing those who possess learning but do not perform good deeds.
- ✦ The myrtle is the inverse of the palm, possessing no taste but having a pleasant fragrance; this is likened to those who are not learned but do good deeds.
- ✦ The willow has neither taste nor fragrance, symbolizing those who possess neither learning nor good deeds.

We, of course, hope to be the etrog, possessing both learning and good deeds. But the reality of life is that our communities are made of all four types of people, and because community is such a high priority in Judaism, we bind all four species together, as we ought to bring together all Jews in one community.

1. Which symbol discussed above best describes you?
2. When you think about your community, are you able to group people into these categories? Are there any categories you would add?
3. What are some ways you can form a community even though each person is unique and different?

Text #2:

Designed for younger students

A Torah commentary teaches that the lulav and etrog represent different parts of the human body: the etrog is the heart; the palm fronds are the spine; the myrtle is the eyes; the willow is the mouth.

1. What do you use your heart, spine, eyes, and mouth for every day?
2. How can we use our heart, spine, eyes, and mouth to make the world a better place?
3. Why do you think we describe the lulav and the Etrog with body parts? How does this relate to Sukkot?