

## **You shall take for yourselves ... an esrog (the fruit of a citron tree), a lulav (the branches of date palms), hadas (twigs of a plaited tree/myrtle), and aravos (brook willows). (23:40)**

*Chazal* (*Succah* 37b) state that one is to take the *lulav* (held) in his right hand, while he takes the *esrog* in the left. The reason for this is that the *lulav* includes three *mitzvos*: *lulav*, *hadas*, *aravah*; the *esrog* is singular. This does not seem consistent with the *Midrash's* (*Vayikra Rabbah* 30:12) characterization of the symbolic representation of each of the *arba minim*, four species. The four species allude to four types of Jews. The *esrog*, *pri eitz hadar*, the beautiful fruit of a tree, has *taam* and *reiach*, taste as well as fragrance. It parallels the *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, who is learned as well as proficient in carrying out *maasim tovim*, good deeds. His taste is Torah, his fragrance is his various outreach and kindness activities to his fellow. The *lulav* produces dates which have taste, but the palm has no fragrance. Likewise, some Jews possess Torah knowledge (and study), but are deficient in their performance of good deeds. The *hadas* has fragrance, but no taste, thus representing the Jew who performs *chesed*, acts of lovingkindness and good deeds, but sadly is deficient in his knowledge of Torah. The last is the willow, which has neither taste nor fragrance. Unfortunately, some Jews are neither Torah-erudite nor stand out in the area of human outreach with acts of loving kindness. Having said this, we wonder why the *esrog*, which represents the consummate *talmid chacham* who supplements his Torah study with acts of *chesed*, is not held in the right hand? Furthermore, why is the *brachah* created for the *arbah minim al netilas lulav*, and not for the *esrog* which is more distinguished than the other three? Last, we bind together the three species that are held in the right hand, while the *esrog* only comes "in contact" with the other three during the actual performance. What is the reason for this? Indeed, given its allusion to the quintessential *talmid chacham*, one would think it would be in contact with the others during the *brachah*.

The *Chafetz Chaim* responds to the third question practically. The *talmid chacham* should, for all intents and purposes, remain distinct from the common Jew. Of course, when he is needed for inspiration or advocacy, he should be prepared to involve himself in their needs – and then return to his self-imposed withdrawal. It is through such seclusion that he will be able to maintain his elevated spiritual status.

The *K'sav Sofer* explains that, once the *esrog/talmid chacham* has bonded with the other *minim*/rest of *Klal Yisrael*, it has reproved their past and inspired their future behavior, creating a level of Jew elevated from his previous status. These Jews reach a higher level than what the *talmid chacham* himself had enjoyed. They are *baalei teshuvah*, penitents, about whom *Chazal* teach, *B'makom she'baalei teshuvah omdim ein tzaddik gamur yachol la'amod*; "In the place where a returnee to Judaism stands, a completely righteous person cannot stand." This is why the *esrog* is held in the left hand and why we make the blessing on the *lulav*. Once these three *minim*/Jews have bonded with the *kedushah*, their spiritual status goes over the top. As *baalei teshuvah*, they have achieved a higher spiritual status.

Diversity within *Klal Yisrael* is good as long as unity exists. Bundling the four *minim* together underscores the importance as well as benefits of unity. The *Sefas Emes* sees the four species as enhancing *Klal Yisrael's* diversity. They empower every Jew with his own unique talents and approach to finding his special place within *Klal Yisrael*. We, each and every one of us have our individual purpose in Hashem's Master Plan. By coalescing with others who are either similar to us or who contrast us, we avail ourselves the opportunity to grow spiritually by learning from them and by looking into ourselves. We also see that we need one another. No Jew can accomplish his purpose without the assistance of others. Living for one's self is not living. We are a nation, with each one of us contributing to its success as a Torah nation. We are a nation comprised of individuals with one focus: to serve Hashem in accordance with His Torah. We may have varied approaches, all which adhere to Hashem's will. This is what makes us the *Am Hashem*, Nation of G-d.