
סדור

לב שלם

Siddur

Lev Shalem

לשבת ויום טוב

FOR SHABBAT
& FESTIVALS

Hallel

Taking Up the Lulav

The Plants

The four species of the *lulav* and *etrog* represent the four types of ecosystems in the Land of Israel: desert (date palm), hills (myrtle), river corridors (willow), and the lowlands (*etrog*). Each species has to be fresh, with the very tips intact—they can't be dried out, because they should hold the water of last year's rain. Together, they make a kind of map of last year's rainfall, and together, we use them to pray for the coming year's rain.

—DAVID SEIDENBERG

The Four Species

Each of the elements of the *lulav* and *etrog* are metaphors for distinctly different people—all of whom, together, comprise the people Israel. The *etrog*, which has a beautiful smell and a delicious taste, represents those of the people Israel who are learned and also do good deeds. The date (*lulav*), which has a delicious taste but no smell, represents those who study Torah but perform no good deeds. The myrtle (*hadass*), which gives off a delightful smell but has no taste, represents those who perform good deeds but do not study Torah. And the willow (*aravah*), which has neither taste nor smell, represents those who neither perform good deeds nor study Torah. “What should I do with them?” asks God, “Punish those who are lacking? No; rather, I shall ask them all to come together and form one assembly, as it is written, ‘You shall take for yourselves, on the first day...’ (Leviticus 23:40).”

—PESIKTA D'RAV KAHANA

Another Interpretation

In taking up the *lulav* and *etrog*, we are symbolically dedicating ourselves. Rabbi Mani began his discourse: “All my bones shall say: Adonai, who is like You?” (Psalm 35:10). This verse refers to the *lulav*. The rib of the *lulav* resembles the spine of a person; the *hadass* (myrtle) resembles the eye; the *aravah* (willow) resembles the mouth; and the *etrog* resembles the heart.

—LEVITICUS RABBAH

The blessing over the lulav and etrog is recited while standing. The lulav is held in the right hand (with the three myrtle branches on the right and the two willows on the left) and the etrog in the left hand, with the hands close together. The etrog is held with the pitam (tip) facing down while reciting the b'rakhah, and then turned over so that the pitam points up. The lulav and etrog are not taken on Shabbat.

Barukh atah ADONAI, our God, sovereign of time and space, who has provided us with a path to holiness through the observance of mitzvot and has instructed us to take the lulav.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al n'tilat lulav.

Upon taking the lulav for the first time each year:

Barukh atah ADONAI, our God, sovereign of time and space, for granting us life, for sustaining us, and for bringing us to this moment.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam, she-he'heyanu v'kiymanu v'higianu la-z'man ha-zeh.

The symbol ♫ indicates the moments that the lulav is waved. Additional notes about waving the lulav and etrog during Hallel may be found in the right margin.

סדר נטילת לולב

The blessing over the lulav and etrog is recited while standing. The lulav is held in the right hand (with the three myrtle branches on the right and the two willows on the left) and the etrog in the left hand, with the hands close together. The etrog is held with the pitam (tip) facing down while reciting the b'rakhah, and then turned over so that the pitam points up. The lulav and etrog are not taken on Shabbat.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֶּךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת לֹולָב.

Upon taking the lulav for the first time each year:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִלֶּךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהֵחֵינּוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

The symbol ♫ indicates the moments that the lulav is waved. Additional notes about waving the lulav and etrog during Hallel may be found in the right margin.

WAVING THE LULAV. The Mishnah (Sukkah 3:9) instructs that the *lulav* is waved back and forth at two moments during the recitation of Hallel: at *hodu*, when we thank God for God's goodness (see pages xx and xx), and at *hoshiah na*, when we ask for God's help (see page xx). The Babylonian Talmud explains that the waving is in six directions, representing the four winds as well as heaven and earth (Menaḥot 62b). Customs vary, with some waving the *lulav* front and back, right and left, up and down, and others waving it in a circular motion, to the front, right, back, left, and up and down.

TAKING THE LULAV. At the end of the growing season, varieties of vegetation are taken and waved in thanksgiving for the bounty of nature. The Torah records: “You shall take the product of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before Adonai, your God, seven days” (Leviticus 23:40).

The four varieties (*arba-ah minim*) represent four different kinds of natural growth. The *lulav* is the leaf of the date palm. Like all leaves and branches, it harnesses the energy of the sun, giving life to the tree, which in turn produces edible fruit; although dates were among the most energy-packed foods of the ancient world, the *lulav* itself is not edible. The *hadass* (myrtle) is a beautifully fragrant leaf but this low-lying bush bears no fruit. The *aravah* (willow) has no smell or taste, but is found close to pools of water; water is essential for all agriculture, for all life. In fulfilling the mitzvah, both of these species are attached to the branch of the palm. Finally, the *etrog* (citron) is itself an edible fruit, with a delightful fragrance and a beautiful yellow sheen. It is therefore honored in its own right, being held next to, but not attached to, the *lulav*. Thus the full bounty of nature and its processes are celebrated.