

CHAPTER 45 - THE FOUR SPECIES

by Rabbi Dr. Azriel Rosenfeld

On SUKKOS a person must hold four species: a palm branch (LULAV), two willow twigs, three myrtle twigs, and a citron (ESROG); see 651:1. The first three species should be tied together, with their lower ends aligned and with the myrtle extending higher than the willow, and it is also customary to bind the LULAV in three places; see 651:1. The three species are held in the right hand and the citron in the left hand, all pointing upward (see 651:2); on what is done by a left-handed person or a person who is missing a hand see 651:3-4. The species may be held indirectly, provided they are held in a respectful way (651:7). The species are held together (see 651:11) and shaken when the blessing is recited, and also at "Praise HA-SHEM..." and "HA-SHEM, please save us" in the HALLEL (see 651:8); this is done by moving them (clockwise) forward, backward, leftward, rightward, upward, and downward (see 651:9-10).

The blessing is recited only if a person has all four species (651:12-13), but if any are missing or invalid (649:6), they may be held as a remembrance (646:11;651:12). Other species, or more than the required number of each species, must not be used (651:14-15). The four species should be first held in the morning (after sunrise, or if necessary after dawn); they may be held all day, but especially when HALLEL is recited (652:1). On eating before holding them see 652:2. On deriving benefit from them during the holiday see 653:2 and 665:1-2; on smelling them see 653:1. Fresh ones may be taken during the holiday; on putting them in water to keep them fresh see 654:1. On species that were brought from outside the Sabbath boundary see 655:1.

The Biblical Commandment about the four species applies outside the Temple only on the first day of SUKKOS, but the Rabbis extended it to all seven days (658:1). The four species must not be handled on the Sabbath, even on the first day (658:2). On the first day, a person may fulfill the Commandment only with species that he entirely owns (649:2;658:3,7); he may fulfill it if he receives them as a gift, even on condition that he must return them (see 658:3-9). On other ownership problems with the species see 649:1-5. On giving the species to a child see 657:1 and 658:6; on the importance of acquiring the species see 656:1 and 658:9.

The LULAV should be fresh (see 645:5;649:6) and straight (see 645:8-9); its leaves should be in pairs that lie flat, cover its spine, and are not split or spread apart (see 645:1-4,7); and its upper leaves should not be cut off (see 645:6). The myrtle should be fresh (see 646:6-9;649:6) and should consist mostly of green leaves or berries (see 646:1-2); its leaves should be triple (joined at the bases of their stems; see 646:3-5) and its tip should be intact (see 646:10). The willow should be fresh and its tip

intact (see 647:2); its leaves should be long and smooth or slightly serrated (see 647:1). The ESROG should be fresh (see 648:1) and intact (see 648:2-6), including its tip and stem (see 648:7-8), and free of growths (see 648:9-15); on its color see 648:15-17,21; on its shape see 648:18-20; on its size see 648:22. We are lenient about some types of defects after the first day; see 649:5-6. The myrtle and willow twigs should be at least three handsbreadths long and the spine of the LULAV at least four handsbreadths long (650:1-2).

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