

MOVING FAST INTO THE GARDEN

by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

The Midrash relates that bringing together the "arba'ah minim" - four species on Succos, represents the notion that all of Bnei Yisroel are one and should be viewed as such regardless of their level of commitment to Judaism. The "esrog" - citron has both a taste and a fragrance, thus representing those amongst Bnei Yisroel who possess Torah knowledge and good deeds. The "lulav" - palm branch, which lacks fragrance but has a taste contained in the dates produced by the palm tree, depicts those Jews who possess Torah knowledge but lack good deeds. The "hadas" - myrtle branch possesses a fragrance but lacks a taste, reflecting those Jews who practice good deeds but do not engage in the study of Torah. The "aravah" - willow branch has neither a taste nor a fragrance, representing those amongst Bnei Yisroel who have no Torah knowledge and do not engage in good deeds[1].

We do not use the dates produced by the palm in the performance of the mitzva, rather the branch of the tree, which is tasteless. Therefore, why is the lulav branch considered to have a taste?

Citing the Maharil, the Ramah teaches that we should begin building a Succah as soon as Yom Kippur concludes, thereby moving immediately from the fulfillment of one mitzva to the fulfillment of another[2]. Why must we move immediately to the mitzva of Succah rather than charity, Torah study, or any other mitzva?

The Talmud derives the laws pertaining to the construct of the Succah from the clouds which arose from the Garden of Eden[3]. What is the connection between the Garden of Eden and the Succah?

The Talmud relates that when Bnei Yisroel received the Torah on Shavuot, they reached the level of Adam prior to the sin in the Garden of Eden. However, when they committed the sin of the Golden Calf, Bnei Yisroel returned to the level of Adam after he was banished from the Garden for having eaten from the Tree of Knowledge. On Yom Kippur Bnei Yisroel received atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf, and they should have gone into Eretz Yisroel, built the Beis Hamikdash, and once again attained that special closeness with Hashem. However, instead they committed the sin of the spies which resulted in the death of that entire generation[4].

Succos represents the time period when, after having received atonement on Yom Kippur, we enter the Garden of Eden, i.e. the Succah. This is the reason why the construct and decor of the Succah, as well as the four species which we are commanded to take in it are made to resemble a garden. Immediately after Yom Kippur we are preoccupied with building the Succah, displaying our desire to

attain this elevated level of closeness with Hashem by joining him in the Garden of Eden.

The Midrash teaches that one of the characteristics of the Garden of Eden was that the bark of the fruit trees tasted of the fruit^[5]. Taking the branch of the palm tree to represent the taste of the dates is reflective of the notion that we are recreating our existence in the Garden of Eden.

1. *Vayikra Rabbah* 30
2. *Orach Chaim Hilchos Yom Hakippurim* 224:4
3. *Succah* 11b
4. *Avodah Zarah* 5a
5. *See Rashi Bereishis* 1:11