



United we stand, divided we fall, the Sukkos Perspective 2020

The Sukkos Perspective is dedicated in memory of Shlomo Ben Edward. May his soul be uplifted and his memory a blessing.

The Sukkos Perspective is in honor of Sasson Betzalel ben Batya and Sapir Bas Ariela. May they have a quick and speedy recovery.

Sukkos is a holiday of happiness and unity. We celebrate Sukkos in commemoration of the miraculous cloud of glory that Hashem provided the Jewish people during their forty-year journey through the desert.

We observe the holiday by eating, drinking, and spending as much time as possible in the sukkah. As the Pasuk says (*Vayikra 23:42*), "*For seven days, all the children of Israel shall live in the sukkah*". We are to bind together the Arba minim (four types of fruit): an Esrog (citron), a Lulav (palm branch); three Hadassim (myrtle twigs); and two Arava (willow twigs). On each day — except Shabbos — we make a Bracha over them and shake them in each direction.

There is a well-known question brought down by the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Rambam in Mishnah Torah writes many rules on the Arba minim. Regarding the lulav, esrog, and hadas, he has extensive regulations for their origin, size, color, etc.

However, concerning the Arava, he just writes one line of law regarding its top. Why does the Arava not have the same in-depth rules and regulations as the other three fruits? Why is it seemingly looked over?!

The Midrash explains that each fruit of the Arba minim represents the various personalities that comprise the Jewish nation. We emphasize this intrinsic unity on Sukkos through the binding together of the Arba minim.

The esrog, which can be eaten and has a fabulous aroma, represents a Jew who studies the Torah and keeps its mitzvos diligently. The lulav, which has dates that grow along its side that can be eaten, but does not have an aroma, represents the Jew who studies the Torah but does not follow its mitzvos meticulously.

The hadas, which have a beautiful aroma but cannot be eaten, represent the Jew who carefully and precisely follows the mitzvahs but does not study the Torah itself. The Arava, which cannot be eaten and has no aroma, represents the Jew that neither studies the Torah nor follows its mitzvos.

The Rambam does not write much about the Arava, as it represents the Jews who are unaffiliated and unobservant. However, the Pasuk still includes him by saying, *“Let them all be bound together.”* Even though they may not seem comparable or equivalent to each other, if the Arba minim were missing just one of these species (i.e. Jews), it wouldn't be fit for the mitzvah.

There is a story of a successful author who was busy writing a biography of the famous conductor Arturo Toscanini, one of the most acclaimed musicians of the early 20th century. He was renowned for his photographic memory, restless perfectionism, and his phenomenal ear for orchestral detail.

One day the writer called Toscanini and asked if he could come over the following night. The great maestro told him that he could not meet that night, as he was planning to listen to an orchestra concert over the radio that he had conducted the previous year.

The writer asked if he could join him and discuss the concert after it was over. Toscanini agreed, but on the condition that he would not disturb him during the concert.

The next night, they listened together to the orchestra's performance. When it was finished, the writer smiled and proclaimed, "*Wasn't that magnificent?*"

"No, it wasn't," Toscanini answered sternly, "there were supposed to be one hundred and twenty musicians, among them fifteen violinists — however, only fourteen were present!" The writer could not believe his ears but did not dare question the great maestro. Nonetheless, he was intrigued and wanted to investigate to verify if Toscanini was right.

The next morning, he called the director of the orchestra and asked him how many musicians were supposed to be in the orchestra, and how many had actually shown up.

As Toscanini stated, the director told him that there were supposed to be one hundred and twenty musicians, but one of the fifteen violinists called in sick. The author was in awe and could not understand how Toscanini could have noticed that one violin was missing.

That night, he returned to Toscanini and asked him how he was able to discern the missing violin in an orchestra of 120 musicians. Toscanini answered with authority and said, "*There is a great difference between you and me. As part of the general audience, everything sounds great to you. But I, being a conductor, must know every sound that comes forth from the orchestra. When I heard the concert, I noticed that some notes were missing, and I knew immediately that one violinist was missing.*"

When we shake the lulav and esrog on Sukkot, it represents the many types of Jews that make up the Jewish nation. However, if we are missing just one, we are not considered complete because we are all equal in G-d's eyes.

It is when we stand together that we are blessed and sanctified. As we say each day at the end of the Shemoneh Esrei, "***We are blessed when we are united.***"

However, the Lubavitcher Rebbe continues, not only does the lulav and esrog represent unity in the Jewish people, but rather, within ourselves as well, as we are perfect imperfections.

There are times when we are in tune with spiritually as a result of our dedication to G-d and his commandments. However, there are also moments that we are out of touch with Hashem because of our misdeeds. Despite this, it is our imperfections that complete us as human beings.

G-d is the grand maestro of the universe and orchestrates our lives every single second. He is the one who created each of us perfectly imperfect, and every moment of our life, we have the opportunity to grow further in our relationship with Hashem.

Every junction we come across in life is part of G-d's master plan, something of which we do not even have the slightest understanding.

However, when we grasp onto G-d, He gives us a glimpse of our true capabilities, which will motivate us to aim higher and reach further than we ever thought possible. We must maximize our potential in this world!

As we unite together on Sukkos, first physically by being together in the Sukkah and then spiritually by binding the Arba minim, we build the ultimate vessel for the blessings of G-d to shower upon us.

We create a perfect opportunity for growth and advancement on both a communal and individual level, bringing us ever closer to celebrating Sukkos in the Beis Hamikdash and the ultimate Redemption.

May we merit to celebrate this Sukkos in a physical embrace of G-d with the ultimate redemption!

Have a joyous and meaningful Sukkos!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini