

Sukkot

The Succah and the Four Species
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
Two Ways to Unity



of *Succos* seem to be divided into distinct categories: The *succah* on hand, and the four species (the *esrog*, *hadas* and *arava*) on the other. Is there a connection between the two?



At first sight, the *mitzvos* of the festival are two: the one *lulav*, other. Is

Let's answer one question with another: Why do we go out and live in a *Succah* after Yom Kippur?

On Rosh Hashana, Hashem judges the world, and on Yom Kippur He seals the decree. Now, it may be that He has decreed that the Jewish People go into *galus* (exile). So we make ourselves a *succah* and "exile" ourselves from our homes, and Hashem considers this as though we had in reality gone into exile.

This is a very strange idea - how can it be, that by merely walking a few meters from our houses it is as though we had gone into exile? ...and what a pleasant exile at that! Let us try and understand how the "exile" of the succah works.

The Distance Between Us

Another question: What makes people distant from each other?

Answer: The desire to take, to grab.

The underlying rationale of acquisitiveness is that whatever you have depletes from what I have. In other words - you are using my space, you are breathing my air, you are filling up my world! Everything you have means I have less! When a person feels like this, the **very existence** of other people bothers him. This is what is called *Sinas Chinam* - baseless hatred. *Sinas Chinam* brings exile to the Jewish People - two thousand years ago, the Second *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed and we were exiled and dispersed all over the world because of *Sinas Chinam*.



But the punishment for *Sinas Chinam* - exile - is also its cure. Exile causes a person to feel rootless and de-stabilized, and inevitably this negates his trait of acquisitiveness. The feeling that others are depriving me from what is rightfully mine is replaced by a feeling of unity, of "I may have very little - but you are welcome to share it!" And so the punishment of exile cures the separation between people.

The *succah* represents the nullification of material power and acquisitiveness - however wealthy a person may be, he is obliged to leave the realm of his wealth, his house and all its symbols of power and status - all the things that make him think that the world is his - and dwell in a temporary dwelling. Destabilized, he feels how much he needs Hashem to protect him - that his own power is nothing. He dwells under the "shade of faith." By living in a temporary dwelling, he sensitizes himself to the very temporary nature of his dwelling in this world.

This creates the sense of vulnerability and instability *which is the hallmark of exile*. It is this feeling of exile which unifies the Jewish People and nullifies the selfishness that leads to *Sinas Chinam*, which was the reason for the verdict of exile in the first place. And, remarkably, by moving just a few meters out of our homes, we have in reality experienced *galus*.

Another Way to Unity...

But how do the *Four Species* fit into the picture?

The *Four Species* represent four types of Jew. The *lulav* is from a palm tree - the palm has no smell, but it has fruit - the date. It represents the Jew who has Torah learning but doesn't observe the *mitzvos*. The *hadas* (myrtle) has fragrance but no fruit - that's the Jew who keeps *mitzvos* but has no Torah learning. The *esrog* has fragrance and is also an edible fruit - that's someone who has both Torah and *mitzvos*; and the *arava* (willow) has neither fruit nor smell - he has neither Torah nor *mitzvos*. Hashem says that it is impossible for any of these types to be lost - rather they should be "bound together" - like the *Four Species* (which we bind together). Then, the ones with Torah and *mitzvos* will atone for those who have neither, and the merit of those who had neither Torah nor *mitzvos* will be that they were the means, the vessel by which the others could do the *mitzvah* of elevating them through being joined together with them. The end result is that unity reigns amongst the Jewish People. They are bound together like the *Four Species*.
The *succah* and the four species - two ways to unity.

*Adapted from Michtav M'Eliyahu
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