



HAZON DETROIT
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LOCAL LULAV

SHAKE LOCAL
SUKKOT





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Welcome!

Our rabbis say (Tosafot, Suk. 37b) that when we shake the lulav and etrog on Sukkot, “the trees of the forest sing with joy.” So that got us to wondering, how might we help the trees around us sing with the most possible joy this holiday season and beyond?

For a typical Sukkot, the United States imports upwards of 500,000 lulavim from Israel and Egypt, so that we can shake our traditional bundles made from palm fronds, willow, myrtle, and citron. This combination of species has become so definitional that most of us probably don't even consider that a lulav could be constructed any other way. However, the original Torah text (Lev 23:40) is rather open-ended as to which species can be used (p.5). Plus, harvesting and shipping traditional lulavim from so far away has a significant environmental impact, causing upwards of 160 metric tonnes of carbon pollution (p.6). Does that add to the joy of the trees? Is there a way that we can shake lulav, and celebrate Sukkot - a holiday all about the earth, the land, the rain, and the natural world - more sustainably? Let us suggest the local lulav!

Inside this packet, you will find a wide range of accessible resources designed to support you in engaging in the ritual practice of shaking local lulav - a Sukkot lulav bundle made from four species that grow right here in Michigan. Whether you add your local lulav to your lulav collection, or replace your traditional bundle with this local version, we are asking you to consider what it feels like to shake a local lulav that pays homage to Michigan's local plant-life, while rooting yourself and your ritual object in the place where you are. How does this connect you with the holiday and the natural world around you? How does it feel to align your Jewish practice with your sustainability values and the themes of this holiday?

On Sukkot, we shake the lulav to bring down rain from the sky to water our crops and give us new life come spring. It is our hope that by shaking local this Sukkot, you'll be able to conjure just a little more abundance, a little more life, and a little more joy for us and the trees. We wish you happy shaking!



Text Study I

The Trees of the Forest Will Sing With Joy

On the Jewish harvest festival of Sukkot, we are commanded to gather together four unique plant species, and wave them together in the six directions, in an attempt to more deeply connect with the natural world, each other, and the Divine. When we do this, we're told, "all the trees of the forest will sing with joy" (Psalms 96:12).

Discuss:

What would it mean for the trees of the forest to "sing with joy"? What conditions would have to be in place for this to happen?

Text Study II

The Four Species

Traditional lulavim consist of an etrog, a date palm frond, a myrtle branch, and a willow branch. But the Torah (Leviticus 23:40) instructs:

On the first day you shall take the fruit of the beautiful tree (פְּרִי עֵץ הַדֶּרֶךְ), fronds of palm trees (כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים), branches of woven trees (עֲנָף עֵץ-עֲבֹת), and valley-willows (וְעֶרְבֵי-נַחַל), and you shall rejoice before YHVH your God for seven days.

Discuss:

What characteristics of these species seem to be most important to the text?
What does the text say about where these species should come from?
What specific instructions do you see the text providing about what species to use?



Text Study III

Environmental Impact

About 500,000 palm fronds are shipped from the Middle East to the US each Sukkot (NY Times). This shipping causes approximately 160 metric tonnes of carbon pollution, which is equivalent to 35 passenger cars driven for a whole year, or the emissions from 18,000 gallons of gasoline.

Discuss:

When you consider the environmental impact of importing lulavim for Sukkot, how might your experience of the holiday change? How might using local lulavim help you connect with the earth that surrounds you? How might using local lulavim help the forests “sing with joy”?

Text Study IV

Local Ritual

“I had connection to this lulav. These plants that grow near me, some even in my yard... They know me...and I, them. I knew my lulav. I felt connection whereas with a lulav ordered from a far away land, that had to be purchased with money... And all of the ethical implications that arise from that transaction. Well, my lulav had none of those. It danced rain drops to my ears. It smelled lovely and it brought me closer to the space that I inhabit and the plants that inhabit the space with me.”

- The Book of Lulav, p. 10

Discuss:

What would it mean for you spiritually, to make your lulav bundle using plant species native to Michigan? What might be gained and what might be lost? What values are you prioritizing when you choose your lulav? To what other Jewish rituals/holidays could a local focus be applied? How could these values inspire changes to other consumer choices in your life?



Lulav 101

Etrog

פְּרִי עֵץ הַדֶּרֶךְ

Translation: Fruit of beautiful tree

Traditional: Etrog

Local: Apple

Set-up: 1 apple, held separately



Lulav

כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים

Translation: Upright palm fronds

Traditional: Date palm tree

Local: Phragmites

Set-up: 1 reed, center of bundle, spine facing you



Hadass

עֲנַף עֵץ-עֵבֶת

Translation: Branches of leafy, corded trees

Traditional: Myrtle

Local: Sumac

Set-up: 3 branches, right of Phragmites



Aravah

וְעֵרְבֵי-נַחַל

Translation: Blended branches of the valley

Traditional: Willow

Local: Willow

Set-up: 2 branches, left of Phragmites





Lulav Symbolism

Midrash is a type of creative Jewish interpretation that seeks to find deeper meaning in textual ideas and symbols. Below are four different *midrashim* that offer unique understandings of lulav and etrog.

I.

The four species represent four different kinds of Jews, with a sense that all are necessary for a full community:

Etrog - With both taste and smell, this represents those who both study Torah and do good deeds.

Myrtle - With a smell but no taste, this represents those who do good deeds but do not study Torah.

Lulav - With tasty fruit but no smell, this represents those who study Torah but don't do good deeds.

Willow - With neither taste nor smell, this represents those who neither study Torah or do good deeds.

II.

The four species represent four body parts, with a sense that we experience Judaism, being alive, and praising God with our full selves:

Etrog - the heart

Myrtle - the eyes

Lulav - the spine

Willow - the mouth

III.

The four species represent the nature of Sukkot as a harvest festival:

They correspond to the land, settledness, fruit, and fertility. This is in contrast to the sukkah, which represents wandering, rootlessness, dryness, and sand.

IV.

The four species represent the four letters of the Divine name:

Etrog - yod (י)

Myrtle - hey (ה)

Lulav - vav (ו)

Willow - hey (ה)



Lesson Plan

This is a sample lesson plan. You should adapt based on the age of your students, time constraints, objectives, etc.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will know the four plant species used in both the traditional lulav and the local lulav.
- Students will know one interpretation of the symbolism of the lulav.
- Students will understand the environmental impact of shipping items - including lulavim - from far away.
- Students will understand the spiritual and environmental value of sourcing ritual objects - including lulavim - locally.

Materials:

- Local lulav materials
- Traditional lulav (or pictures)
- Text Study III, Lulav Symbolism II, Lulav 101
- Natural objects, journal/paper, pen/markers (optional)

Plan:

- Bring students outside. Invite them to find natural objects that look like the heart, the eyes, the spine, and the mouth. If you can't go outside, bring in a variety of natural objects from outside for students to look at. Have them collect one of each item and/or draw them.
- Lead a "free dance" or "shake it out" game to get students feeling connected to their body. Ask them to focus on the four body parts from above as they move. Ask how it feels to intentionally move their body?
- Brainstorm a list of every Jewish ritual/holiday they can think of that requires use of the body in some way (ie. using hands and fingers to light Shabbat candles). Discuss how Judaism and Jewish ritual requires us to use our full bodies and why they think that is.
- Introduce/review the holiday of Sukkot and the concept of the lulav. Read/discuss Symbolism II and why Sukkot especially would be a holiday that requires the full body (rain dance, harvest festival, all about dwelling outside, exposed to elements).
- Introduce the local and traditional lulav, asking students to identify which items they think correspond to the four body parts. Refer to Lulav 101 if helpful. Ask why there would be two different versions.
- Discuss Text Study III, the environmental impact of shipping lulavim, and the environmental/spiritual benefits of shaking local lulavim.
- Invite students to shake both lulavim. Discuss/journal how it feels to shake each and reflect together.



Lulav Blessings

To shake the lulav:

1. First pick up the etrog/apple in your right hand with the stem facing upwards. Transfer the etrog/apple to your left hand. Be careful not to break off the stem of the etrog/apple.
2. Pick up the lulav with your right hand so that the spine of the lulav/phragmites is facing you. The hadassim/sumac should be on your right and the aravot/willow should be on your left.
3. Hold the lulav and the etrog together and recite the first blessing below. If it's your first time shaking lulav this year, or your first time shaking local lulav, recite the second blessing, as well.
4. Turn the etrog/apple so that the stem faces downward and shake the lulav and etrog in all six directions (east, south, west, north, up, and down).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר
קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת לֹולָב.

Baruch atah Ado-nai, Elo-hainu Melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'zivanu al netilat lulav.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, whose mitzvot add holiness to our lives and who gave us the mitzvah to take up the lulav.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה.

Baruch atah Ado-nai, Elo-hainu Melech ha-olam, she-hekheyanu v'kiy'manu laz'man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, for granting us life, for sustaining us, and for helping us to reach this day.





Next Steps

Shaking local lulavim is just one example of what it might look like to reimagine and reconstruct a Judaism that is responsive to the natural world around us, and that is responsible to the global environment that we all share. We invite you to get more involved in Hazon Detroit, so we can continue to do that work together. Find out more at hazon.org/detroit and be in touch at detroit@hazon.org

If you're feeling inspired to get more involved in the work of environmental sustainability in the year 5782, join with hundreds of people from across the country and right here in Metro Detroit, who have made a personal commitment to living a more sustainable life by joining the Brit Hazon. Learn more and sign up at hazon.org/BritHazon.

In the year ahead, may you feel grounded, empowered, and motivated to do your part in helping to ensure a healthier and more sustainable world for all.

