Parashat Sukkot I | Leviticus 22:26–23:44

"On the first day you shall take the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, seven days" (Lev. 23:40).

In the Talmud, the festival of Sukkot is called "the Chag" the festival par excellence and it was a combination of grateful joy with prayers for continued blessings, i.e. rain. To rejoice before the Lord was not just an option but an explicit command, coming with a bouquet of the four plants.

The Midrash offers many interpretations of the four species of Sukkot. Here is one of them:
The *etrog*, smelling good and tasting good, symbolizes people who are learned and do good deeds. The *lulav*, having taste but no fragrance, stands for people who are learned but lack good deeds. The *myrtle*, which has fragrance but no taste is a symbol for people who are doing good but lack learning. Finally, the *willow*, having neither taste nor fragrance stands for people lacking both learning and good deeds.

The mixed bouquet symbolizes the communities, a mixed bunch of people, all standing at different learning points in their lives. The important thing is to include everybody, to make everybody a part of the community so that in coming together – just as we are – the joy and the rejoicing before God may be multiplied.

Reflection:
1. Where have I been a perfectionist, expecting people to be different instead of just accepting them as they are?
2. Meditate on the four species and what they symbolize – in which direction do you want to grow?

Barbara Kauffmann, Germany
September 25, 2026

https://batkolinternational.org/parashat-sukkot-1-2026/