

Put Them Together and Shake: Assembling the Arba Minim

1 - Individual Activity – Arba Minim in Jewish Law

Arba Minim in the Torah

The Torah describes the mitzvah of the Arba Minim (Four Species) that are used on Sukkot.

Read the verse from Leviticus (Vayikra) and answer the questions below.

Leviticus 23:40

ויקרא כ"ג:מ'

(40) 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.

(מ) וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בְּיוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרֵי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים וְעֵנָף עֵץ-עֵבֶר וְעַרְבֵי-נַחַל וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים:

- If you didn't know anything about the Arba Minim but wanted to fulfill the mitzvah described in the verse, what difficulties would you have in following the instructions?
- What do you need to know in order to fulfill the mitzvah?

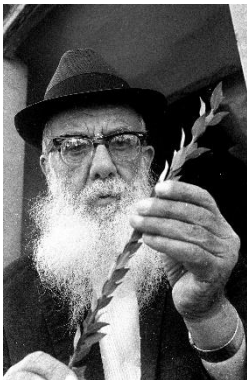
Arba Minim in the Mishnah and in Primary Sources

The Mishnah, the first book of the Oral Torah, further explains the mitzvah. Chapter 3 of Tractate Sukkah explains the requirements for each of the four species that make up the Arba Minim.

Color-code all of the references to each species in the photographs and Mishna verses below:

For example, highlight in purple the mention of the species in the Leviticus verse, the description in the Mishnah, and the photograph number.

All photographs are from the Dan Hadani Archive at the National Library of Israel.



Photograph #1



Photograph #2



Photograph #3



Photograph #4

Mishnah Sukkah 3:1

משנה סוכה ג'א'

(1) A stolen or a dried up *lulav* is invalid. One [that came] from an *asherah* tree or from a condemned city is invalid. If its top was broken off or its leaves were detached, it is invalid. If its leaves are spread apart it is valid. Rabbi Judah says he should tie it at the top. The thorny palms of the iron mountain are valid. A *lulav* which is three handbreadths in length, long enough to wave, is valid.

(א) לולב הגזול והיבש, פסול. של אֲשֶׁרָה וְשֶׁל עֵיר הַנִּדְחָת, פֶּסוּל. נִקְטָם רֹאשׁוֹ, נִפְרָצוּ עָלָיו, פֶּסוּל. נִפְרְדּוּ עָלָיו, כָּשֶׁר. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר, יֵאָגְדֵנוּ מִלְמַעְלָה. צִנִּי הַר הַבְּרָזֵל, כְּשֵׁרוֹת. לולב שֵׁישׁ בּוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה טַפְחִים כְּדִי לִנְעֹנֵעַ בּוֹ, כָּשֶׁר:

Mishnah Sukkah 3:2

משנה סוכה ג'ב'

(2) A stolen or withered *hadas* [myrtle branch] is invalid. One [that came from] an *asherah* tree or a condemned city is invalid. If its tip was broken off or its leaves were detached or its berries were more numerous than its leaves, it is invalid. But if he diminished them it is valid. But many [do] not diminish them on the festival.

(ב) הַדָּס הַגְּזוּל וְהַיָּבֵשׁ, פֶּסוּל. שֶׁל אֲשֶׁרָה וְשֶׁל עֵיר הַנִּדְחָת, פֶּסוּל. נִקְטָם רֹאשׁוֹ, נִפְרָצוּ עָלָיו אוֹ שֶׁהָיוּ עֲנָבָיו מְרֻבּוֹת מֵעָלָיו, פֶּסוּל. וְאִם מִעֲטָן, כָּשֶׁר. וְאִין מִמַּעֲטָין בְּיוֹם טוֹב:

Mishnah Sukkah 3:3

משנה סוכה ג'ג'

(3) A stolen or withered *aravah* is invalid. One [take from an] *asherah* tree or from a condemned city is invalid. One whose tip was broken off or whose leaves were detached, or a *tzatzefah* is invalid. One that was shriveled or had lost some of its leaves or one grown in a rain-watered soil is valid.

(ג) עֲרַבָּה גְּזוּלָה וְיָבֵשָׁה, פֶּסוּלָה. שֶׁל אֲשֶׁרָה וְשֶׁל עֵיר הַנִּדְחָת, פֶּסוּלָה. נִקְטָם רֹאשָׁהּ, נִפְרָצוּ עָלֶיהָ, וְהִצְפָּצָהּ, פֶּסוּלָה. כְּמוֹשָׁהּ, וְשִׁנְשָׁרוּ מִקְצֵת עָלֶיהָ, וְשֶׁל בַּעַל, כָּשֶׁרָה:

Mishnah Sukkah 3:6-7

משנה סוכה ג'ו'-ז'

(6) If a rash spread out on a majority of it, or if its pitom is removed, if it is peeled, split, or perforated so that any part is missing, it is invalid. If a rash spreads out on a lesser part of it, if its stem was missing, or if it is perforated but no part of it is missing, it is valid. An etrog [which is

(ו) עָלְתָה חֲזָזִית עַל רַבּוֹ, נִטְלָה פְּטָמָתוֹ, נִקְלַף, נִסְדָּק, נִקָּב וְחָסַר כֹּל שֶׁהוּא, פֶּסוּל. עָלְתָה חֲזָזִית עַל מַעוּטוֹ, נִטַּל עֲקָצוֹ, נִקָּב וְלֹא חָסַר כֹּל שֶׁהוּא, כָּשֶׁר. אֶתְרוֹג הַכּוֹשִׁי, פֶּסוּל. וְהִירוֹק כְּכֶרֶתִי, רַבִּי מֵאִיר מִכְשִׁיר, וְרַבִּי יְהוּדָה פּוֹסֵל:
(ז) שְׁעוֹר אֶתְרוֹג הַקָּטָן, רַבִּי מֵאִיר אוֹמֵר, כְּאֶגֶז. רַבִּי יְהוּדָה אוֹמֵר, כְּבִיצָה. וּבְגָדוֹל, כְּדִי שִׁיאַחֵז

black] as an Ethiopian is invalid. An etrog which is green as a leek: Rabbi Meir declares it valid and Rabbi Judah declares it invalid.

(7) The minimum size of an etrog: Rabbi Meir says: the size of a nut. Rabbi Judah says: the size of an egg. The maximum [size] is such that two can be held in one hand, the words of Rabbi Judah. Rabbi Yose says, even one that can only be held with his two hands.

שנים בידו אחת, דברי רבי יהודה. רבי יוסי אומר,
אפלו אחד בשתי ידיו:

2 – Individual activity - Identify the Species

The Mishnah gives the basics rules for the Arba Minim. Law codes that were written later explain the rules further. To make it easier for a person to check that each component of their Arba Minim set meets the specifications (i.e., is kosher), *Aish.com* has written a summary of the requirements for each.

Below is the list from *Aish.com* with the name of the species removed. Follow these instructions for each of the four species:

- Identify the species and add its name.
- Add the name where it has been removed in the text.
- Highlight according to the colours used for the previous activity on this worksheet.
- For an extra hint, see the Mishnah quote at the bottom of the page.

Name: _____

- Should preferably be turning yellow rather than green.
- The peel cannot be punctured in any spot nor can it lack any of its inner skin.
- The peel cannot be overly soft, cracked, dry, or peeled.
- Even a small black dot on the upper part may invalidate it.
- The shape should preferably be like a tower: wider at the bottom and narrower at the top.
- If this particular ____ grew with a protruding stem (called a pitom), then that stem cannot be broken off. (However, if it grew without a pitom, it is still kosher.)

Name: _____

- You will need three ____ branches.
- A kosher ____ has a pattern of three leaves coming out from the same point in the branch. This three-leaf pattern must be repeated over at least half the length of the branch.
- Each branch should be at least 11 inches (29 cm.) long.
- The branch cannot be dried out.

Name: _____

- You will need two ____ branches.
- The stem should preferably be red.
- The stem should be at least 11 inches (29 cm.) long.
- The leaves should be oblong, not round in shape.
- The leaves should have a smooth, not serrated, edge.

Name: _____

- Look at the very top of the branch and make sure that the most central leaf is not split but rather is closed (at least halfway down).
- The top cannot be cut off.
- The branch cannot be dried out.
- It should be at least 16 inches (39 cm.) long.
- The straighter the branch, the better.

Mishnah Sukkah 3:4

משנה סוכה ג'ד'

(4) Rabbi Ishmael says: three *hadasim*, two *aravot*, one *lulav* and one *etrog*...

(ד) רבי ישמעאל אומר, שלשה הדסים ושתי ערבות, לולב אחד ואתרוג אחד...

3 - Discussion Questions

Choose at least two questions to discuss with your partner.

Be prepared to participate in a class discussion about the Arba Minim.

1. Have you or your family ever had your own Arba Minim?
2. Where were they grown?
3. Did you buy it as a set or select each individual component separately?
4. Why do you think the people in the photographs chose to buy each component separately?
5. How do you think you would feel about the Arba Minim if you chose each component yourself?
6. How do the photographs enhance your understanding of the mitzvah (commandment) of the Arba Minim?
7. What is the reason for the Arba Minim?
8. What do they represent? (There are many answers to this question.)
9. How are the Arba Minim used?
10. The festival of Sukkot is also called *zman simchateinu* (the time of our happiness).
11. Why is Sukkot a happy time?
12. How do the Arba Minim add to or express our joy?
13. Sukkot is the final harvest festival of the year.
14. How do you think the farmers felt at the end of the harvest?
15. What emotions, besides happiness, do you think are experienced on Sukkot?

4 - Creative Activity (Individually or in Pairs)

Choose one of the following:

1. Design an infographic of the Arba Minim. Include photographs and the requirements for each component. Suggested websites: Venngage and Canva.
2. Imagine you are walking around the Arba Minim market where the photographs were taken and you meet people who are assembling their own sets of Arba Minim.
3. Record a conversation with the people that you meet. (Note: Although the photographs are of Haredim choosing their Arba Minim, Jews from all walks of life buy Arba Minim.)
 - a. What are they buying/selling?
 - b. What are they looking for when they choose the best one?
 - c. What does the mitzvah of the Arba Minim mean to them?
 - d. What is their favorite aspect of the festival of Sukkot?