

The Depth of Lulav & Esrog

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The Lulav Corresponds To Yitzchok or Yosef

The *Midrash* compares the Four Species to Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov and Yosef.¹ The *esrog* corresponds to Avraham, the *lulav* corresponds to Yitzchok, the *hadassim* to Yaakov, and the *aravos* to Yosef. However, the Zohar says that the *lulav* corresponds to Yosef².

The *Midrash* also states that the Four Species correspond to four different parts of the body.³ The *lulav* corresponds to the spine, the *hadassim* correspond to the eyes, the *aravos* correspond to the mouth (the lips), and the *esrog* corresponds to the heart. Here we will focus on how the *lulav* corresponds to the spine.

Lulav Corresponds To the Spine & Yitzchok Avinu

The *Gemara* says that there are 18 interlocking points in the spine.⁴ The human spine and the animal spine have the same general structure. The Rambam writes that the spine is connected to the brain by a chord, which has a protective shell.⁵ This chord allows the brain's life-giving energy (*chiyus*) to extend through the spine. It extends the energy from the upper section of the body into the lower section of the body.

The *lulav* also bears this correspondence. The leaves of the *lulav*, which extend upwards from the spine of the *lulav*, correspond to the chord that connects the spine with brain. Just as the brain is soft tissue and the spine is hard, so are the leaves of the *lulav* soft and the spine of the *lulav* is hard. The highest part of the spine is above the brain, and it is parallel to the where the *tefillin* are placed [directly behind the skull]. This is called the “*luz* bone”, where the Resurrection of the Dead begins from.⁶

As mentioned earlier, the *lulav* corresponds with Yitzchok, and just as Yitzchok experienced a degree of the Resurrection of the Dead [when he was tied to the Altar, his soul left him and Hashem returned his soul to him], so does the *lulav* correspond to the Resurrection of the Dead [for the *lulav* corresponds to the spine, and the top of the spine is the *luz* bone, where the Resurrection of the Dead begins from].

Here we will see that there are two aspects to the *lulav*: the spine, and the leaves. The spine of the *lulav* corresponds to Yosef. The spine itself does not extend upward, it does not ascend, and so does Yosef represent the concept of non-ascension. The leaves of the spine of the *lulav* correspond to Yitzchok, and just as the leaves ascend upward, so did Yitzchok ascend upwards, when he was sanctified as an *olah* at the Altar.

Is the The Lulav or the Esrog More Prominent?

When listing the order of the Four Species, the Torah first lists the *esrog*, then the *lulav*, and then the *hadassim* and *aravos*. However, when the Mishnah discusses the laws of the Four Species, the Mishnah first discusses the laws of the *lulav*, whereas the laws of the *esrog* are described last. This needs understanding.

There appears to be a novel concept here. We must say that there are two aspects to the *esrog*. In one aspect, the *lulav* is more prominent than the *esrog*, and in the other aspect, the *esrog* is more prominent than the *lulav*. We shall explain how.

Lulav\Line and Esrog\Circle

The shape of the *esrog* is similar to the shape of a skull, whereas the shape of the *lulav* resembles a spine. If an *esrog* is as round as a ball, it is invalid for use. However, a skull is not perfectly round. The skull is not the brain, it

¹ *Vayikra Rabbah* parshas Emor 30:10

² *Zohar III: Raya Mehemna* parshas Pinchos 236a, 256a

³ *Vayikra Rabbah* parshas Emor 30:14

⁴ *Berachos* 28b

⁵ *Peirush HaMishnayos L'Rambam: Chullin* 3:1

⁶ *Beraishis Rabbah* 28:3

is above the brain. The brain is above the spine, and the skull is above the brain. In contrast with this, the *lulav* must be straight, and if it is bent too much and it resembles a chisel, it is invalid. (The *hadassim* and *aravos* though are kosher for use if they are bent or crooked.)

Clearly, we can see the difference between the spine\lulav and the skull\esrog. The straight shape of the *lulav*, which resembles the spine, represents the concept of *yashrus*, uprightness [also called *yoisher*, the “line”, of Creation]. The round shape of the *esrog*, which resembles the skull, represents the concept of *igul*, the “circle” (or the equalization, or equilibrium) of Creation, where all points are equidistant from the center.

[In terms of the two Messiahs, which correspond to the *lulav*\Yosef and *esrog*\Dovid]: The *lulav* corresponds to Yosef, and the *esrog* corresponds to Moshiach ben Dovid. From the viewpoint of *Moshiach* ben Yosef, the *lulav* comes before the *esrog* [meaning that *yoisher*\line\straightness\uprightness is more prominent than *igul*\circle\roundness\equilibrium] but from the viewpoint of *Moshiach* ben Dovid, the *esrog* comes before the *lulav* [meaning that *igul* is more prominent than *yoisher*].

The *Gemara* says the blessing over the Four Species is recited over the *lulav*, since it is the tallest of the four species [hence it appears the most prominent]. The *Gemara* asks: Why don't we lift the *esrog* above the *lulav*, and then make the blessing over the *esrog*? The *Gemara* answers that it is because the *esrog* must be held together with the *lulav* when reciting the blessing, so the *esrog* cannot be placed higher than the *lulav*.

We can learn from this that the *Gemara* originally thought that there is no requirement to hold the *esrog* together with the *lulav* when reciting the blessing, and that is why the *Gemara* thought that perhaps the *esrog* can be placed higher than the *lulav*. The *Arizal* wrote explicitly, however, that the *lulav* and *esrog* need to be held together. The *Shulchan Aruch* rules that they must be held together.

However, **it seems that in the future, the blessing of the Four Species will be over the *esrog*.** The *Gemara*'s original thinking, that the *esrog* should be placed above

the *lulav*, is really about the future. The *halachah* in our times is that the blessing is made over the *lulav*, but this is because we live in a world after the sin. That is also why the Mishnah first discusses the laws of the *lulav* before the *esrog*.

In our times, the *lulav* corresponds to Yosef, while the *esrog* corresponds to Dovid. Yosef corresponds to the concept of *yesod*, foundation, while Dovid corresponds to *malchus*, royalty. In our times, *lulav*\Yosef\yesod is more prominent than *esrog*\Dovid\malchus. In Hashem's four-letter name of *havayah*, the letter *heb* corresponds to the *esrog*, and the letter *vov* corresponds to the *lulav*.

Our *avodah* nowadays is in *yoisher*, also called *kav*, the “line”, which also connotes a war with the evil inclination. This is depth of what Chazal say, “We have been victorious”. But in the higher dimension, the *esrog* precedes the *lulav*, meaning that *esrog*\igul\Dovid\malchus is more prominent than *lulav*\yoisher\kav\Yosef\yesod. This will be manifest in the future, when *Moshiach* ben Dovid will rule, when the world will return the state of before the sin, when the bark of the tree tasted like its fruit – because the entire world will be at equilibrium. That is why the *esrog* is round, like the round skull which is above the spine, above the place where the body receives life-giving energy from, and above even the brain, the source of the spine, where the spinal cord extends from.

In our times, a round *esrog* is invalid for use. But in the future, it will be kosher for use. The *esrog* in our times is less prominent than the *lulav*, hence the *esrog* is subservient to the *lulav* in our times – and that is what causes the *esrog* not to be perfectly round.

Two Kinds of Life – Lulav\Straightness\Choosing, and Esrog\Roundness\Equilibrium

The word *lulav* is equal in numerical value to the word *chaim* (life), which is 68. The word *esrog* is equal to 610, which is almost equal to 9 times the amount of 69 (612). The *lulav* and *esrog* have different aspects of *chiyus*, of life-giving energy.

Both a dry *esrog* and a dry *lulav* are invalid for use. An *esrog* is deemed too dry if a needle and string can pass through it or not, meaning that its dryness is measured by how moist it is. Concerning the *lulav*, though, there are three different opinions of what defines a dry *lulav*: Either if it is 12 months old, or if it is easily broken from the touch of a fingernail, or if its green color has whitened.

A *lulav* is straight, for it resembles the spine. On a deeper level, this corresponds to the idea of *bechirah*, to choose, between good and evil. Since the *lulav* corresponds to *chaim*\life, and the Torah says that one should “choose life”, the straightness of the *lulav* represents the “line” that one must find between the two points of good and evil, of life and death. Often a person needs to take the middle path, as the Rambam says.

The other kind of “life” is represented by the *esrog*. The round shape of the *esrog*, which corresponds to the skull, represents a kind of life where one is naturally pulled after good. The *esrog* stays on the tree from year to year, and it does not fall to the ground like the fruit of all other trees. It is the very opposite idea of the *lulav*, which becomes too dry after 12 months. The *esrog* represents the state of before the sin, when there was no death yet, where there was only eternity. After the sin, there was death, and now our life depends on how we utilize our *bechirah*. Through using our *bechirah* correctly, we draw forth life.

Now that we are after the sin, the *esrog* can also “die” [i.e. it can become dry], but even when the *esrog* dies\dries, it hints that its main role is to draw forth life on its own – how so? Its dryness is determined by how moist it is, and moisture is from the element of water, which corresponds to eternal life, for water comes to a person without any exertion and preparation to get it, and also, it comes from Heaven, as opposed to being produced from the ground. It also can be consumed the way it is, unlike bread, which needs to be baked first. It also does not have to be digested.

In the *lulav*, however, a lack of moisture does not show that it is dry. The *lulav* is not meant to be eaten, hence its moisture or lack thereof does not define its aliveness.

Earlier, we mentioned that the Resurrection of the Dead will begin from the *luz* bone, which is parallel to

the place [behind the skull] where the *tefillin* is placed. This is the top of the spine. Thus, the Resurrection of the Dead is linked with the *lulav*, as opposed to the *esrog*. The *esrog* corresponds to the point before the sin, as mentioned earlier [hence the Resurrection of the Dead is not linked with the *esrog*, for the *esrog* is rooted in the point where there is no sin and hence no “death”].

The *Midrash* says that a *lulav* has a taste with no scent. Taste corresponds to eating, and eating is linked with Adam HaRishon. The *lulav*'s taste is its fruit, which are dates. Chazal state that one should cleave to Hashem as two dates which cling to one another.⁷ As is known, the purpose of the *Melaveh Malka* meal is to give enjoyment to the *luz* bone. It is a higher form of enjoyment. The *luz* bone did not partake in Adam's act of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, hence it enjoys a higher form of pleasure. The meal of the *Melaveh Malka* is not enjoyed by a person on physical level, and only the *luz* bone enjoys it. It is an act of eating which is undamaged from sin, and that is why the *luz* bone has enjoyment in it.

In Conclusion

When the *lulav* and *esrog* will be joined together in the future, it will be the joining of Yosef (*lulav*) with Yehudah (*esrog*).

Nowadays, we bind together three of the Four Species, and the *esrog* is not included in this. But **in the future, the *esrog* will be joined together with the other three species, and the *esrog* will also be held above all of them, and the blessing will be over the *esrog*: “And they will become unified, in your hands.”**⁸

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⁷ *Sanhedrin* 64a

⁸ *Yechezkel* 37:17