



SUKKOT

The Unsung Hero of Sukkot

The Willow Is More than Just a Branch

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Sukkot

For forty years, as our ancestors traversed the Sinai Desert following the Exodus from Egypt, miraculous “clouds of glory” surrounded and hovered over them, shielding them from the dangers and discomforts of the desert. Ever since, we remember G-d’s kindness and reaffirm our trust in His providence by dwelling in a sukkah—a hut of temporary construction with a roof covering of branches—for the duration of the Sukkot festival (on the Jewish calendar, Tishrei 15–21). For seven days and nights, we eat all our meals in the sukkah and otherwise regard it as our home.

Another Sukkot observance is the taking of the Four Kinds: an

etrog (citron), a *lulav* (palm frond), three *hadasim* (myrtle twigs), and two *aravot* (willow twigs). On each day of the festival (except Shabbat), we take the Four Kinds, recite a blessing over them, bring them together in our hands, and wave them in all six directions: right, left, forward, up, down, and to the back. Our sages in the Midrash tell us that the Four Kinds represent the various types and personalities that comprise the community of Israel, whose intrinsic unity we emphasize on Sukkot.

Sukkot is also called “the time of our joy”: Indeed, a special joy characterizes the festival. Nightly water-drawing celebrations,

reminiscent of the evening-to-dawn festivities held in the Holy Temple in preparation for the drawing of water for use in the festival service, fill the synagogues and streets with song, music, and dance until the wee hours of the morning.

The seventh day of Sukkot is called Hoshanah Rabah (“Great Salvation”) and closes the period of Divine judgment that began on Rosh Hashanah. A special observance is the *aravah*—the taking of a bundle of willow branches.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

When have you, or someone you know, underestimated another's true impact only to realize their importance or unique contribution later? What was that realization like, and what did you learn from it?

Were you ever the person whose impact was overlooked? Was it later discovered and acknowledged? How did that feel?

TEXT 1

Midrash, *Vayikra*
Rabah 30:12

מָה אֶתְרוֹג זֶה יֵשׁ בּוֹ טַעַם וְיֵשׁ בּוֹ רִיחַ,
כֹּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם שְׂיֵשׁ בָּהֶם
תּוֹרָה וְיֵשׁ בָּהֶם מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים . . .

מָה הַתְּמָרָה הַזֹּאת יֵשׁ בּוֹ טַעַם וְאֵין בּוֹ
רִיחַ, כֹּךְ הֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בָּהֶם שְׂיֵשׁ בָּהֶם
תּוֹרָה וְאֵין בָּהֶם מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים . . .

מָה הַדָּס יֵשׁ בּוֹ רִיחַ וְאֵין בּוֹ טַעַם, כֹּךְ
יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בָּהֶם שְׂיֵשׁ בָּהֶם מַעֲשִׂים
טוֹבִים וְאֵין בָּהֶם תּוֹרָה . . .

מָה עֶרְבָה זוֹ אֵין בָּהּ טַעַם וְאֵין בָּהּ רִיחַ,
כֹּךְ הֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בָּהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם שְׂאֵין
בָּהֶם לֹא תּוֹרָה וְלֹא מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים.

As the citron is flavorful and fragrant, so are there Jews who study Torah and have good deeds.

. . . As the date palm is flavorful but not fragrant, so too are there Jews who study Torah but do not perform good deeds.

. . . As the myrtle is fragrant but not flavorful, so too are there Jews who perform good deeds but do not study Torah.

. . . As the willow is neither flavorful nor fragrant, so are there Jews who study no Torah and perform no good deeds.

We compare the Four Species we use on Sukkot to four different types of Jews.



citron

Studies Torah,
does good deeds



myrtle

Does good deeds,
no Torah study



willow

No Torah study,
no good deeds



date palm

Studies Torah,
no good deeds

TEXT 2A

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of *Lulav*
7:20–23

הִלָּכָה לְמֹשֶׁה מִסִּינַי שֶׁמֵּבִיאִין בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ
עֲרֵבָה אַחֶרֶת חוּץ מֵעֲרֵבָה שֶׁבְּלוּלָב.
וְאִין אָדָם יוֹצֵא יָדָיו חוֹבְתוֹ בְּעֲרֵבָה
שֶׁבְּלוּלָב. וְשִׁעוּרָהּ אֶפְלוּ עָלֶיהָ אֶחָד בְּבֶד
אֶחָד.

כִּיצַד הֵיטָה מְצֻנָּה?

בְּכָל יוֹם וַיּוֹם מִשְׁבַּעַת הַיָּמִים הָיוּ
מֵבִיאִין מֵרְבִּיּוֹת שֶׁל עֲרֵבָה וְזוֹקְפִין אוֹתָן
עַל צִדְדֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְרֹאשֵׁיהֶן כְּפוּפִין עַל
גְּבִי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ. וּבָעֵת שֶׁהָיוּ מֵבִיאִין אוֹתָהּ
וְסוֹדְרִין אוֹתָהּ, תּוֹקְעִין וּמְרִיעִין
וְתוֹקְעִין.

חַל יוֹם שַׁבָּת לִהְיוֹת בְּתוֹךְ הַחֵג אֵין
זוֹקְפִין עֲרֵבָה, אֲלָא אִם כֵּן חַל יוֹם
שְׁבִיעִי לִהְיוֹת בְּשַׁבָּת זוֹקְפִין אוֹתָהּ
בְּשַׁבָּת, כִּדִּי לְפִרְסָמָהּ שֶׁהִיא מְצֻנָּה . . .

There's a *mitzvah* conveyed by an oral transmission, dating back to Moses at Mount Sinai, that a willow branch, in addition to the one we bind to the *lulav*, is taken in the Temple. This obligation cannot be fulfilled with the willow that's tied to the date palm. At a minimum, one must have one branch with one leaf on it.

How was this *mitzvah* performed?

On each of the seven days of the festival, willow branches were brought into the Temple and placed upright near the altar with their tops bent over the altar. While arranging them near the altar, a series of shofar blasts—*tekiah*, *teruah*, and *tekiah*—were sounded.

This ritual was not performed on Shabbat during the festival unless Shabbat fell on the seventh day of the festival. In that case, the ritual was performed to broadcast that it is a *mitzvah*. . . .

TEXT 2A

Maimonides, *Mishneh
Torah*, Laws of *Lulav*
7:20–23

בְּכָל יוֹם וַיּוֹם הָיוּ מְקִיפִין אֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
בְּלוּלֵבֵיהֶן בְּיָדֵיהֶן פַּעַם אַחַת וְאוֹמְרִין
"אֲנָּה ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא, אֲנָּה ה' הַצְלִיחָה
נָּא" (תְּהִלִּים קיח, כה), וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי
מְקִיפִין אֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים.

They would then walk one circuit around the altar,
carrying the *lulav* in their hands, chanting, "G-d, please
save us. G-d, please grant us success" (Psalms 118:25).
On the seventh day, they would walk around the altar
seven times.

Besides waving the lulav,
we use the **willow** on the
seventh day of Sukkot,
when we walk around the
bimah (altar) seven times
and hit it on the ground.
This tradition was passed
down orally from Moses.



TEXT 2B

Maimonides, ibid.

וְעֶרְבָה זוּ, הוֹאִיל וְאֵינָהּ בְּפֶרוּשׁ בַּתּוֹרָה,
אֵין נוֹטְלִין אוֹתָהּ כָּל שְׁבַעַת יְמֵי הַחֹג
זָכָר לְמִקְדָּשׁ, אֶלָּא בְיוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּלֵבֶד
הוּא שְׁנוּטְלִין אוֹתָהּ בְּזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

כִּיצַד עוֹשֶׂה?

לֹקֵחַ בַּד אֶחָד אוֹ בַדִּין הֶרְבֵּה חוּץ
מִעֶרְבָה שְׁבִלּוּלָב, וְחוֹבֵט בָּהּ עַל
הַקֶּרֶקַע אוֹ עַל הַכְּלִי פְעָמִים אוֹ שְׁלֹשׁ
בְּלֹא בִרְכָה, שֶׁדָּבָר זֶה מְנַהֵג גְּבִיאִים
הוּא . . .

וְכָבֵד נִהְגוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל הַמְּקוֹמוֹת
לְהַנִּיחַ תְּבָהּ בְּאֶמְצַע בֵּית הַכְּנֶסֶת,
וּמְקִיפִין אוֹתָהּ בְּכָל יוֹם כְּדָרְךָ שְׁהִיוּ
מְקִיפִין אֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, זָכָר לְמִקְדָּשׁ.

This *mitzvah* doesn't appear explicitly in the Torah, so we only perform the remembrance ceremony on the seventh day of the festival, not on the other days.

What is the remembrance ceremony?

We take a willow or many willows, in addition to the one bound to the *lulav*, and we strike the ground or a utensil with them two or three times. No blessing is recited because this practice is a custom instituted by the prophets. . . .

It has become a universally accepted Jewish custom to place the ark in the center of the synagogue and walk around it each day, as they walked around the altar, in remembrance of the Temple service.

We still do this *mitzvah* today but with some differences from the Beit Hamikdash:

- In the Temple, willows were placed by the altar; today we strike the willow on the ground.
- In the Temple it was an oral *mitzvah*; today it is a remembrance custom.
- In the Temple people circled the altar with the *Lulav*; today we circle to continue this custom.
- The mitzvah was not done on Shabbat.

TEXT 3

Jerusalem Talmud,
Sukkah 4:1

רַבִּי סִימּוֹן מְפַקֵּד לְאִילָיִן דְּמַחְשָׁבִין: יְהִיבֹן דְּעִתְכּוֹן דְּלָא
תַּעֲבִדוּן לֹא תְּקִיעָתָה בְּשַׁבָּתָא וְלֹא עֲרֵבָתָא בְּשַׁבָּתָא.
וְאִין אֲדַחְקִיתוּן, עֲבִדוּן תְּקִיעָתָה וְלֹא תַעֲבִדוּן עֲרֵבָתָא.

Rabbi Simon would instruct those who arranged the calendar:
“Ensure that [Rosh Hashanah], the day the shofar is sounded, and
[the seventh day of the festival], the day we strike the willow
branch, never fall on Shabbat.

“If one of them must fall on Shabbat, arrange for the day of shofar
sounding to fall on Shabbat, but never the day of willow striking.”

QUESTIONS

1. Why is the willow chosen for this special *mitzvah*, even though it represents Jews who neither study Torah nor do many *mitzvot*?
2. Why do we go to great lengths to ensure we can perform the willow ritual, even arranging the calendar around it, more than other *mitzvot* such as sounding the shofar or taking the *lulav*.

TEXT 4A

Rabbi Shmuel
Schneersohn, *Sefer
Hamaamarim* 5637:2,
pp. 614–615

הִנֵּה נִוְדַע מֵאֵמֶר רַבּוֹתֵינוּ זְכוֹרָם
לְבִרְכָּה עַל ד' מִיָּנִים שֶׁפְּלוּלָב אֵלּוּ,
שֶׁכּוֹלָם רוֹמְזִים עַל הָאַחָדוּת. שֶׁהַלּוּלָב
הוּא כָּפוּת, שֶׁכָּל הָעָלִים דְּבוּקִים
בְּאַחֲזִיזִים זֶה בְּזֶה כְּאֵלּוּ הֵם אֶחָד . . .
וְגַם כָּל עֵלֶה כָּפוּל לֵב', שֶׁגַּם זֶה מוֹרָה
עַל הַיּוֹתֵם בְּאַחָדוּת . . .

וְהַדָּסִים גַּם כֵּן הֵם תְּלָתָא בְּחֵד קִינָא,
שֶׁזֶהוּ מוֹרָה גַּם כֵּן עַל הָאַחָדוּת . . .

וְכֵן הָעֶרְבָּה גַּם כֵּן נִקְרָא אַחְוִינָא
בְּגִמְרָא, עַל שֵׁם שֶׁגִּדְּלִים בְּאַחְוָה,
אַגוּדוֹת אַגוּדוֹת, שֶׁכָּל זֶה רוֹמֵז עַל עֲנֵן
יְחוּדָם בְּאַחְוָה, הֵיכַף הַפִּירוּד.

We are all familiar with our sages' teaching that the four species represent unity. The leaves of the palm branch grow as if they are bound to each other, each leaf attached to its neighbor as a single branch. In addition, each leaf has two parts—another demonstration of unity. . . .

The leaves of the myrtle branch grow in tight clusters of three, which also signifies unity. . . .

Similarly, the willow branch is called a unity branch in the Talmud because they grow in brotherly bunches. All this demonstrates that they are united in brotherhood—the opposite of separation.

TEXT 4A

Rabbi Shmuel
Schneersohn, *Sefer
Hamaamarim* 5637:2,
pp. 614–615

וְהָאֶתְרוֹג הֵנָּה גֹדֵל בְּאֵילָנוּ מִשָּׁנָה לְשָׁנָה
... וּמוֹבִיל עַל עֲצָמוֹ כָּל שְׁיִנוּי
הָאֵוִירִים מִד' תְּקוּפוֹת הַשָּׁנָה, וְאֵינָנו
מְתַפְעֵל מִזֶּה כָּלָל. וְלֹא כִּמּוֹ כָּל הַפִּירוֹת
שְׂאִינּוֹ יָכוֹל לְסַבּוֹל אֵוִיר הַקָּר אוֹ גַּם
הַלַּח כּו'. אֲבָל הָאֶתְרוֹג סוֹבֵל עַל עֲצָמוֹ
כָּל הָאֵוִירִים הַמִּתְגַּדִּים זֶה לָזֶה. שְׂכָל זֶה
הָרִי הוּא הוֹכָחָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹכִיחַ לוֹ ה'
אֲשֶׁר בְּמִינֵיהֶם אֵלֵינוּ יֵשׁ אֶחָדוֹת. עַד
שֶׁהָאֶתְרוֹג מֵאֶחָד הָאֵוִירִים הַנִּתְגַּדִּים.

The citron grows throughout the year. . . . It tolerates the diverse climates of the four seasons and remains unharmed by any of them, unlike other fruits. All fruits have a season and can't sustain frosts, downpours, etc. The citron tolerates conflicting climates. These are all implanted by G-d to indicate that these species represent unity, especially the citron, which unites all the conflicting climates.



The Four Species
symbolize **unity**.

QUESTION

So why do these groups, with almost nothing in common, come together instead of focusing on their differences?

TEXT 4B

Rabbi Shmuel
Schneersohn, ibid.

שׁוֹרֵשׁ עֲנִיָּן חִיבוּר ב' בְּחִינֹת יִחָד, זֶהוּ מִצַּד הַהֶרְגֵּשׁ
שְׁמֵרָגִישִׁים עַל עֲצָמָם בְּחִינָה הַיּוֹתֵר עֲלִיוֹנָה מֵהֶם כּו'.
וְכִמּוּ שְׁכָתוֹב: "הַמֶּלֶךְ וּפְחָד עֲמוֹ, עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם
בְּמִרוֹמָיו" (אִיּוֹב כה, ב), שְׁכָכְדִי שְׁיִהְיֶה שְׁלוֹם
בְּמִלְאֲכֵי מָרוֹם מִיכָאֵל וְגַבְרִיאֵל שֶׁהֵם מִב' מַדּוֹת
הַהֶפְכָּיִים דְּחֶסֶד וְגִבּוּרָה, כְּנוֹדָע שְׁמִיכָאֵל הוּא מְבַחֲנִת
הַחֶסֶד, וְלִכֵּן הוּא שֶׁר שָׁל מִים, וְגַבְרִיאֵל הוּא מְבַחֲנִת
הַגִּבּוּרָה, וְלִכֵּן הוּא שֶׁר שָׁל אֵשׁ. וְעַם כָּל זֶה, יִתְאַחֲדוּ
וְיִהְיֶה שְׁלוֹם בִּנְיָהֶם, וְהַמִּים לֹא יִכְבּוּ הָאֵשׁ הַיֶּפֶךְ
טִבְעָם כּו'. . . . הִנֵּה זֶהוּ עַל שְׁמִתְגַּלְגָּלָה עֲלֵיהֶם הָאֲרָה
הַיּוֹתֵר גְּדוֹלָה מֵהֶם.

וְכִמְשָׁל ב' שָׂרִים גְּדוֹלִים שֶׁהֵם מְנַגְּדִים זֶה לָזֶה,
כְּשֶׁבָּאִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, אוֹ כְּשֶׁהִמְלִיךְ נוֹסֵעַ דֶּרֶךְ עִירָם
וּמְקוֹם עֲבוֹדָתָם, נִעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בִּנְיָהֶם, וְכֵאֵילוֹ לֹא הָיוּ
מְנַגְּדִים כָּלֵל. וְהֵינּוּ מִפְּנֵי גוֹדֵל עוֹצֵם בִּיטוּלָם בְּפִנְי
הַמֶּלֶךְ, מִתְבַּטְּלִים לַגִּמְרִי וּמִתְאַחֲדִים כְּאֶחָד כְּאֵילוֹ לֹא
הָיוּ מְנַגְּדִים זֶה לָזֶה כָּלֵל וְכָלֵל . . .

Opposites unite when they encounter a force greater than themselves. For example, the Torah states, "G-d makes peace in His Heavens" (Job 25:2). The archangel Michael, minister of waters, channels Divine kindness, and the archangel Gabriel, minister of fire, channels Divine stricture. Yet they unite peacefully and force the water to go against its grain and not quench the fire. . . .

This occurs when they perceive G-d's exaltedness, which transcends them both. It's like two powerful government ministers who constantly disagree. Yet, when they appear before the king, or when the king visits their city and place of work, they unite as if they have no disagreements. They are so devoted to the king that they set themselves aside for him and unite as one, as if they were never in conflict.

TEXT 4B

Rabbi Shmuel
Schneersohn, *ibid.*

על דרך זה, כְּשֶׁאֵנוּ מוֹצְאִים בְּד' מִיָּנִים שְׂבִלּוּלָב אֱלֹהִים
מִה שֶׁהֵם נִבְדָּלִים מִשְׁאָרֵי צִמְחִים הַגִּשְׁמִים, וְהוּא בְּמֵה
שֶׁיֵּשׁ בְּחִינַת הָאֶחָדוּת, הֵרִי זֶה אוֹת שֶׁהֵם מְקַבְּלִים
מִבְּחִינַת הָאֵין עַל יְדֵי שֶׁהֵם בְּטָלִים לָאֵין. וְלָכֵן הֵרִי הֵם
כָּלִים שֶׁבָּהֶם נִתְלַבֵּשׁ אוֹר הָרָצוֹן עָלֵיוֹן שְׂבִמְצוֹת לְוִלָּב
וּמִיָּנִי וְאַתְרוּג.

The same is true of the four species. Their profound, unparalleled unity is a sign of their closeness and submissiveness to G-d. This is why they were chosen to be the species through which we fulfill G-d's supernal desire for the *mitzvah* of the four species.

ANSWER

When we shift our focus to something higher within ourselves, small things lose their power and unity takes over. Holding the Four Species connects us to G-d, and the willow, which seems the weakest, actually lifts everyone toward His presence.

TEXT 5A

The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson,
Likutei Sichot 29,
pp. 223–24

דער פֿירוש (הפְּנִימִי) אין דְּבָרֵי הַמִּדְרָשׁ אִיז, אַז
דער חִילוק בִּיאֲשׁוּטֵיט אין דָּעם אוֹפֶן וְאִיכוּת פֿון
זײַער קִיּוּם הַתּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת. תּוֹרָה אִיז פֿאַרְבּוּנֶדן מִיט
מַעֲלַת הַשָּׁכֶל, און מַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים, מִיט מַעֲלַת
הַמַּדּוּת. און דָּאס אִיז דער חִילוק צוּוִינְשֵׁן דִּי ד' סוּגִים.

אַתְרוֹג אִיז מְרִמֵּז אוֹיף דִּי אֵידֶן וואָס אין זײַער קִיּוּם
הַתּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת אִיז דָּא סִי מַעֲלַת הַשָּׁכֶל און סִי
מַעֲלַת הַמַּדּוּת.

אין לולב זײַנען מְרוּמֵז דִּי אֵידֶן וואָס האָבן (בְּעִיקָר)
מַעֲלַת הַשָּׁכֶל.

און אין הָדָס, (בְּעִיקָר) מַעֲלַת הַמַּדּוּת.

און עֶרְבָה אִיז מְרִמֵּז אוֹיף דִּי אָנְשִׁים פֿשוּטִים וואָס
אין זײַער קִיּוּם פֿעלֵט סִי מַעֲלַת הַשָּׁכֶל סִי מַעֲלַת
הַמַּדּוּת, און זײַער קִיּוּם אִיז נָאָר מִיט אַמוּנָה פֿשוּטָה.

A deeper understanding of the Midrashic teaching:
These groups of Jews differ only in the nature and
the quality of their observance of the Torah and
mitzvot. Torah is synonymous with intellect, and
good deeds are synonymous with emotion; herein
lies the difference between the four groups.

The citron represents Jews whose observance is
driven by intellectual stimulation and emotional
inspiration.

The palm branch represents Jews who are primarily
driven by intellectual stimulation.

The myrtle represents Jews who are primarily
driven by emotional inspiration.

The willow represents Jews whose observance lacks
intellectual stimulation and emotional inspiration.
Their observance is driven entirely by pure faith.

All Jews are fundamentally committed to Judaism, but their **motivators** differ:

The Citron →  + 

The Myrtle → 

The Date palm → 

The Willow is neither

TEXT 5B

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak
Schneersohn, *Sefer
Hamaamarim* 5710–11,
p. 4

וְעֶרְבָה הֵם אֲנָשִׁים פְּשוּטִים, דְּקִיּוֹם הַמִּצְוֹת הוּא רַק
בְּאַמוּנָה פְּשוּטָה.

וְזֶהוּ עֶרְבָה לְשׁוֹן עֲרִיבוּת וּמְתִיקוּת, וְכִמוֹ שְׂכָתוֹב:
"וְעֶרְבָה לֵה'" (מְלָאכִי ג, ד).

The willow represents the simple Jew who fulfills the commandments with simple faith.

Aravah, Hebrew for willow, is linguistically similar to *areivah*, pleasant and sweet, as in “pleasant to G-d” (Malachi 3:4).

QUESTION

What motivates the willow?

ANSWER

The willow is motivated by simple faith, doing what G-d wants even without understanding or feeling it. This pleases G-d, because the willow does it simply because they are a Jew.

ANSWER 1

The willow represents simple faith. Even without Torah or many mitzvot, it shows a Jew's natural connection to G-d. This pure faith is the foundation of Judaism and connects all Jews to G-d.

TEXT 6

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak
Schneersohn, ibid.

וְעֶרְבָה אֵין בָּהֶם לֹא טַעַם וְרִיחַ, אֲלָא שְׁהֵם גְּדִלִים בְּאַחֲדוּת.
לְהוֹרוֹת דְּכָל הַשּׁוֹבֵעַ לְכָל הַשָּׁנָה אֲשֶׁר נִמְשָׁךְ בַּחוּדָשׁ
הַשְּׁבִיעִי הוּא מִפְּנֵי הַבִּיטוּל וְהַאֲחֻדוּת שֶׁבְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל
הֵם שְׁווִים בְּעֵינֵי קוֹיָם הַתּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת.

Willows, which are neither flavorful nor fragrant, grow in unity.

This suggests that we merit the inspiration channeled to us during the High Holidays for the entire year due to the modesty and unity among Jews, as all Jews are equal in their study of the Torah and observance of the commandments.



The common thread is that all Jews start with a foundation of faith, but it takes a simple Jew; The willow to remind everyone **of that.**

TEXT 7

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak
Schneersohn, *Likutei
Diburim* 4, p. 578b

דָּעַר בַּעַל שֵׁם טוֹב הָאֵט גְּעֻזְעָהָן דִּי מַעֲלָה פֿון
אַנְשִׁים פֿשוּטִים, בִּי דִי אַנְשִׁים פֿשוּטִים אִיז דִּי
פֿשִׁיטוֹת הָעֲצָמוֹת.

The Baal Shem Tov perceived the greatness of the simple Jew. The simplicity of the simple Jew reflects the purity of G-d's essence.

ANSWER 2

We go to great lengths to perform the willow ritual because it represents simple, unwavering faith. Since this faith never changes, we ensure the mitzvah can always be done, even arranging the calendar so it doesn't fall on Shabbos.

The willow's pure faith,
fully connected to G-d, lifts
us all and strengthens our
faith, showing that despite
our differences, we share
the same foundation and
rise together in unity.



The first six days:

Each group focuses on serving G-d, and the willow reminds them that their service must begin with simple faith, binding them all together.

The seventh day:

We take a single willow and declare ourselves all willow Jews. This custom shows our deep faith, and we never skip it. We adjust the calendar to ensure that the seventh day never lands on Shabbat, which would cancel the ritual.

TEXT 8

The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson,
Likutei Sichot 29, p.
228

על פי זה, יש לבאר דעם פּנימיות הפירוש אין
דעם ונאס יום עֲרְבָה פאלט גיט אויס בַּשָּׁבֶת . . .

יש לומר אז בפנימיות איז דער טעם צוליב דעם
ונאס עֲרְבָה איז פארבונדן מיט א העכערער
מדריגה. דהיינו, ווייל אין דער עֲרְבָה דריקט זיך
אויס פשיטות העצמות בטְהָרָתוֹ, דעריבער איז
דאס באופן אז מ'איז אלעמאל, יעדער יאר,
מקיים מצות עֲרְבָה באופן שוה, אן קיין שינוי;

און דאס איז אן ענין פון חיזוק מצד עצמו, ביז
אז דאס פועלט אין זמן פון וועלט, אז בית דין
איז מעבֵּר הַחֲדָשִׁים כו', און מ'איז מסדר קביעות
הלוחות לכל השנים באופן אז ס'זאל גיט אנרירן
דעם נטילת עֲרְבָה ביום עֲרְבָה.

Accordingly, we can explain the deeper
reason why the day we strike the willow
never falls on Shabbat. . . .

The willow is tied to the highest levels of
Divinity. Meaning, since the willow
channels the purity of the unchanging G-d,
it must be observed every year equally
without change.

Its steady, unchanging nature is so
powerful that it impacts the flow of time in
the sense that Jewish courts establish leap
years and arrange the calendar in a
manner that ensures the willow will be
taken every year on this day.

The quiet, faithful Jew is the foundation of the community. Their simple, steady faith reminds us to find that same faith within ourselves.



KEY POINTS

1. All Jews are observant in one way or another, but we don't all share the same motivation. The motivations that drive us to study Torah and observe *mitzvot* are as varied as we are.
2. The most important motivation is often the most overlooked. It is the bedrock of simple faith in G-d. All Jews have it, but simple Jews *display* it.
3. The simple Jew reminds us of our simple faith. We have many motivations and goals, but each of us has a bedrock of faith.
4. The closer we draw to G-d, the less our differences distract us and the more connected we grow with G-d and each other.
5. This is the message we reflect upon when we wave the four species during the festival of Sukkot, especially when we strike the willow on the seventh day of this festival.

