

Thoughts From The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Holiday and Unity

The month of Tishrei as you know is associated with many holidays. The joyous ones come in the second half of the month, namely the succos festival culminating with Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah.

During the festivity and joy we must emphasize the one theme that is common in this holiday and that is Jewish unity.

On the holiday of Sukkot we take the Ethrog, (citrus fruit), the Lulav, (palm branch), the Hadas, (myrtle), and the Arovah, (willow), and we bind them all together and say a blessing over them.

The midrash tells us that each of the four kinds represents four categories of people. The Ethrog is fruit which has good flavor and a pleasant aroma. The Lulav has a taste but no aroma, the Myrtle has a pleasant aroma but no taste, and the Willow has neither taste nor aroma.

The Ethrog person is one who has knowledge which represents taste and does mitzvot which represents the pleasant aroma. The Lulav person has knowledge but no deeds, the Hadas person has action without knowledge and the willow person has neither knowledge nor action.

The lesson is clear. The only way we should say a blessing is when there is total unity. When all four kinds are bound together and made to feel as

equal parts of the community, we can have one category complement the other. Only through unity can we succeed as a viable community.

How can we achieve such a level of unity? This is where the culmination of Sukkot comes in, the festival of Shmini Atzeret. The midrash explains this holiday with a parable. A king once invited his fellow countrymen to a great feast where he celebrated his rule of his mighty empire. The feasting and partying lasted a full week. After the week was over he said to his best friend, "Stay one more day and we will celebrate together for your departure is difficult for me to handle." The same is true with the festival of Shmini Atzeret. After celebrating Sukkot in such a joyous manner, G-d says, "Do not leave so quickly. Let us celebrate one more day."

It is through our unity with G-d that we can achieve unity amongst ourselves. After all, we are all G-d's children and every Jew has a divine soul which is directly connected to G-d and to the Torah and to each and every Jew.

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