

## Feel the Wave of the Body

### Topic

Sukkot

### Grade Level(s)

4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>

### Big Ideas

The *arba minim* can be seen to represent four body parts that are integral to how one conducts oneself.

The *arba minim* remind us to bring our various parts together to do good.

### Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Become familiar with how the *arba minim* are used on Sukkot
2. Consider how the *arba minim* come together like the body parts they represent
3. Use the symbolism of the *arba minim* as the basis for doing good

### Materials / Technology Needed

- Sets of the *arba minim*. Though it could be costly, having one set for each learner is ideal.
- [Video](#) of back exercises
- Pencils, markers, crayons, paper
- Images of each of the *arba minim*: lulav, *etrog*, *hadas*, and *aravah*
- Glue sticks

### Relevant Vocabulary

|                                                                                                                  |                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| אַרְבַּעַת הַמִּינִים<br>( <i>Arba'at Haminim</i><br>(often referred to<br>as the <i>Arba</i><br><i>Minim</i> )) | The Four Species<br>Waved on Sukkot    |
| לוּלָב<br>( <i>Lulav</i> )                                                                                       | Palm Frond                             |
| אֶתְרוֹג<br>( <i>Etrog</i> )                                                                                     | Citron                                 |
| הָדָס/הָדָסִים<br>( <i>Hadas / Hadasim</i> )                                                                     | Myrtle                                 |
| עֲרָבָה/עֲרָבוֹת<br>( <i>Aravah / Aravot</i> )                                                                   | Willow                                 |
| וַיִּקְרָא<br>( <i>Vayikra</i> )                                                                                 | The Book of Leviticus                  |
| חַז"ל<br>(חֲכָמֵינוּ זְכוֹרֵנוּם לְבָרָכָה)<br>( <i>Hazal / Hachameinu</i><br><i>Zichronam Livrachah</i> )       | The Sages                              |
| פִּטָּם<br>( <i>Pitam</i> )                                                                                      | The blossom end of the<br><i>etrog</i> |
| בְּרָכָה<br>( <i>Berachah</i> )                                                                                  | Blessing                               |
| נְטִילַת לוּלָב<br>( <i>Netilat Lulav</i> )                                                                      | Holding (or shaking) the<br>lulav      |
| כַּוְנָה<br>( <i>kavvanah</i> )                                                                                  | Intention, Concentration               |

### Prepare in Advance

If possible, do this activity in a sukkah. Remember to reserve time in the sukkah.

The beginning of this activity can be done together as a group or in four stations. If doing four stations, set up one station in each corner of the activity's location.

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### Background for Teachers

The waving of the *arba minim*, also called shaking the lulav, on Sukkot is a central element of the joy of the holiday ([Vaykira 23:40](#)). As elucidated by *Hazal* and later codified, the elements of the *arba minim* are one *lulav*, one *etrog*, two *hadasim*, and three *aravot* ([Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim 645 – 648](#)).

### Shaking the Lulav

To assemble the *arba minim*, bundle together the lulav, *hadasim*, and *aravot*. (This is often done with holders made out of extra lulav leaves.) With the spine of the lulav facing the person, the *hadasim* go on the right while the *aravot* go on the left\*. This bundle is taken in the right hand while the etrog is taken in the left hand (though some lefties do the opposite) with the *pitam* facing down. Before joining the etrog to the rest of the bundle, the following *berachah* is said. (The *She'hehyanu* prayer is also said the first time the lulav is shaken during the year.):

בְּרִיךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוֵּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת לולָב  
Blessed are You YHVH our God, Sovereign of the universe,  
who sanctified us with *mitzvot* and commanded us about holding the lulav.

Once the *berachah* is completed, the etrog is turned over and joined with the lulav bundle to be shaken in each of six directions: front, right, back, left, up, and down.

### The Arba Minim and the Human Body

The *arba minim* can be seen as representing parts of the human body. According to one midrashic interpretation ([Vayikra Rabbah 30:14](#)), the species align thus:

| Species       | Body Part | Explanation                                                                                                                       |
|---------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lulav         | Spine     | The lulav is straight like the spine.                                                                                             |
| <i>Hadas</i>  | Eye       | The leaf of the <i>hadas</i> looks like an eye. Also, the <i>hadas</i> can be hidden in the way that the eye is hidden when shut. |
| <i>Aravah</i> | Lips      | The leaf of the willow looks like closed lips.                                                                                    |
| Etrog         | Heart     | The etrog looks like a heart.                                                                                                     |

\**Aravot* comes from the same root as *Ma'arav*—meaning “West.” If one sees the directions of the *arba minim* like a compass with the lulav pointing north, the *Aravot* go on the west side of the bundle.

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As such, the lulav can be seen a reminder that one should remain upright in one's actions, the etrog that one should direct one's thoughts properly in order to do good, the *hadas* that one's eyes should not stray to things that are not appropriate to look at, and the *aravot* that one should be careful with one's speech ([Sefer Ha'Chinuch 324](#)).

### Description of Activities

1. Learners participate in each of four activities. Depending on the needs of the class, these activities can be done as stations or with the whole class together. Note that, some stations require at least two participants.
  - a. Learners do back exercises.
    - i. If doing this all together:
      1. Lead learners in back exercises.
      2. Learners discuss how their spines feel after doing the back exercises. How difficult is it to keep one's back straight while in plank?
    - ii. If doing this in stations:
      1. Learners can follow along with a video.
      2. Learners write reflections on how their spines feel during and after the exercises. Learners also reflect on how difficult it was to keep their backs straight while in plank.
  - b. In pairs, learners draw a partner's eye open and closed. Learners write about how the closed and open images are similar and different. Learners should notice what is missing in the closed-eye image (i.e. the eyeball).
  - c. Learners place their hands on their hearts and notice their heartbeats. Learners reflect on what makes their heart rate speed up and slow down. These could be physical and/or emotional reasons.
  - d. Learners compliment each other.
    - i. If doing this all together, learners compliment the person on either side of them.
    - ii. If doing this in stations, learners compliment the other people in their groups.
    - iii. Learners discuss: How easy would it be to say something unkind instead?
2. Show the *arba minim*. Explain what each of the elements is. Go over the names in both Hebrew and in English. Put together the *arba minim*. (See Background for details.) If there are enough sets of *arba minim*, learners put together sets themselves.

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3. Show learners how to shake the *arba minim*. Make sure to go over the *berachah* and the movements. (See Background for details.) Then give learners the opportunity to shake the lulav themselves. Discuss:
  - a. Which parts of your body do you need to shake the lulav?
    - i. While it might seem as though the arms are the primary mover, note that the lips are necessary to say the *berachah*, the spine to keep everything moving, the eyes to see that everything is put together properly and pointing in the correct direction, and the heart (at least symbolically) to have kavvanah while shaking the lulav.
4. Circle back to the opening activities. Explain that Hazal found a connection between the *arba minim* and four of the core human body parts:
  - a. Lulav = spine
  - b. *Hadas* = eyes
  - c. *Aravot* = lips
  - d. Etrog = heart
5. Ask learners why they think Hazal focused on these particular body parts in their connection. Note that, according to Hazal, these four body parts are particularly capable of doing good and bad.
  - a. It is worthwhile to point out that when one is shaking the lulav, the whole body must be involved in the process.
  - b. Optional Discussion: If one element of the *arba minim* is missing or defective, the entire collection is considered unfit for fulfilling the mitzvah of *netilat lulav*. How does this compare to someone whose heart is not in something they do or whose eyes might be focused elsewhere? It should be emphasized that this is a symbolic approach and is not meant to disqualify someone who has a physical handicap.
6. Explain that learners will make self-portraits in the style of [Hanoach Piven](#), an Israeli artist who uses everyday objects to make portrait collages. For this project learners will use images of the *arba minim* for the spine, eyes, lips, and heart.
7. Tell learners that they will have the opportunity to recognize the good that their classmates do.
  - a. Post the self-portraits on the walls.
  - b. When someone does something good, their classmates (or others) can write anonymously on a sticky note what that person did.
  - c. Take opportunities throughout the year to read the sticky notes and recognize the good that learners do.
  - d. Make sure to keep an eye on the sticky notes to ensure that all learners are recognized for the good things that they do.

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### Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

#### ***For learners who need more assistance***

- Use the English names of the four species.
- Learners create a portrait collage of Hanoch Piven. (See one picture of him below.)

#### ***For learners who need extension opportunities***

- Learners explore other interpretations from Jewish wisdom of what the *arba minim* represent.
- Learners come up with their own interpretations of what the *arba minim* represent.

