



# SUKKOT TREASURE HUNT

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*The holiday of Sukkot involves lots of special "treasures." Follow this Israeli girl as she hunts for the date, willow, myrtle, and etrog that are central to Sukkot.*

## JEWISH CONCEPTS

The outdoor treasure hunt in this story originates in the Biblical book of Leviticus (23:40), with instructions both to gather and to bind the four species for Sukkot. There are many different ways to understand the meaning of the four types of plants; for example, some scholars say that the plants relate to parts of the body. The shape of the *etrog* (citron) represents the heart, the *lulav* (palm frond) the spine, *haddas* (myrtle) is shaped like an eye, and *aravah* (willow branch) represents the mouth. In this interpretation, binding the four species together for Sukkot rituals reminds us to value the wholeness of all humans.

The four species can also be taken to represent four different types of Jewish people. In this interpretation, the citron, which both tastes good and has a pleasant smell, represents a person who studies Torah and acts positively to do good deeds. The palm frond, which one can taste but which has no fragrance, signifies one who studies the Torah but does not perform good deeds. The myrtle boughs, with their lovely aroma but which lack taste, suggest a person who does good deeds but does not study Torah. Finally, the branches of the willow tree have neither aroma nor taste; they are said to represent a person who does not study or perform good deeds. When we think about the four types of plants and bind them together ceremonially, we express our desire for unity—both within ourselves and among the many different people in our community.

## USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

In *Sukkot Treasure Hunt*, the family gathers four different types of plants. Did you know that at Passover (exactly half a year later), the number four also appears many times? During the Passover seder, we ask four specific questions, drink four cups of wine, and tell the Passover story by describing four types of children.

Why is the number four so vital to history and storytelling? You might explore this question by asking your child to think of any other instances when the number four is particularly important. Here are some examples to get you started:

- Directions (north/south/east/west)
- Elements (earth/air/fire/water)
- Matriarchs (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah)
- Sides of a dreidel (*nun, gimel, hey, shin*)
- Seasons (summer/fall/winter/spring)

As you discover instances of the number four, invite your children to incorporate these rich ideas into drawings, paintings, or puppets. Ask them to think about what these images might represent. Like the different ideas about what the four species might signify, the explanations may be obvious or they may seem far-fetched, but they will always be foundations for good conversations!