

WHAT THE ESSROG SAID TO THE LULAV

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Everyone knows what an Essrog is. An Essrog is a citron, something like a lemon, only it is sweeter than a lemon. It tastes more like an orange, but it looks more like a lemon. The Essrog looks like it ought to taste sour, but it really tastes sweet. Many of the other fruits like the pear and the apple taste very sweet and look like they ought to taste sweet. You all know that kids like to play with kids that they think are like themselves. Now, pears and apples and other kinds of fruit are much like kids. They like to play only with these kinds of fruit that they think are like themselves. An essrog looks like a lemon, so the pear thinks the essrog is sour. Therefore, the sweet pear refuses to play with the essrog.

The essrog is not completely without friends, however. He has one very loyal friend, but only one. This friend is called Lulav Green. Lulav knows what the pear and apple don't know; he knows that the essrog is really sweet inside even if he looks sour. How does Lulav know this? Well, Lulav is really especially smart. He is also very courageous, and he is not afraid to play with essrog even if nobody else plays with him. You see, Lulav is made up of three parts. He is made up of three things, a palm branch, myrtle leaves, and a willow branch. The palm branch looks like a back-bone or the spinal cord of a human being. It has a long branch in the middle with thin leaves coming out along the sides all down the branch. The palm branch has a strong back-bone, and it has courage to do what it believes in. So the palm branch helps Lulav to act as it believes, even if its actions are unpopular.

The second part of Lulav is a cluster of myrtle leaves. The leaf of the myrtle looks like a human eye. In other words, the myrtle leaf can see much more than other plants. It can see that the essrog looks like a lemon, but really is sweet. So the myrtle leaf helps Lulav to understand Essrog, and the two play together very nicely.

The third part of the lulav is a willow branch. Now willows grow by the side of water, and the plants that grow by the water are extra rich and healthy. They are very strong. The willow branch in Lulav makes him strong enough to do as he pleases, even when people disagree with him. So Lulav is very lucky. He is made up of a palm branch which gives him a good back-bone of courage; he is made up of myrtle leaves which help him to see things as they really are; and he is made up of a willow branch which makes him extra strong, physically.

One day Lulav and Essrog were walking down the street. Lulav is very tall, as you know, and Essrog is very short. They looked like Mutt and Jeff, like the Trilon and the Perisphere. As they passed by Mr. Apple and Mr. Pear, Apple and Pear smiled, and then, laughed. They pointed at Essrog and remarked how tiny he looked. They started to call him names. They said, "Hello, pint-size. If you were a little bit taller you'd be as high as a worm. And besides you're a sour guy. We don't like sour guys." Lulav got very angry when he heard this talk about his friend, and he started to swish his branches at Apple and Pear, but Essrog stopped him. Essrog said loud enough for all to hear, "Don't hit them, Essrog! Nasty names can't hurt me. They're just jealous".

"Jealous of what, small change?", asked Apple. "Jealous of the honor to be paid to me in the Synagogue", announced Essrog calmly. "You paid an honor?" laughed Pear. "Who are you kidding?" "All right", said Essrog, "if you don't believe that I am to be honored in the Temple, then you just follow us to the Temple."

So Lulav and Essrog marched off to Temple with Apple and Pear behind them. As they walked, other members of the fruit family passed by and asked, "Where is everybody going?" "Haven't you heard", said Apple sarcastically. "We're going to Temple to see the congregation honor Essrog." "Ha, ha", laughed Banana, "That's a good one. Who would honor that pip squeak?" "You'll see", said Lulav. So Banana got in line behind Apple and Pear who were marching behind Essrog and Lulav.

Slowly the line of marchers began to get bigger and bigger. They passed by Mango who stuck his tongue out at Essrog, but, then, Mango joined the march. Peach and Plum soon got in line, and, before you knew it, Lulav and Essrog were leading a parade to the Temple. Into the Temple they went and everyone sat down. Everyone, that is, except Lulav and Essrog. They marched right on up to the pulpit where the Rabbi welcomed them, and the Cantor began to honor them by saying a special prayer over them.

The Rabbi explained that the essrog was the symbol of all the fruit that God had created, and he explained that the essrog was chosen because it had excellent qualities that no one knew that it had. The Rabbi explained the hidden things that everyone has, the hidden things that only God and very smart people know about.

Apple and Pear listened with their mouths open. Who would think that God cared about that little Essrog? Who would think that that sour lemon was really sweet inside? Who would think ---But, now, the Cantor was swishing the lulav north and south, east and west, up and down, and from side to side, and the Rabbi was explaining that this meant that God was everywhere and that His spirit was in the smallest kind of things. The banana felt ashamed and began to turn brown as he blushed. The watermelon was so jealous he turned inside out. He became green with envy on the inside, and he blushed red on the outside. The cheeks of the mango turned pink. How wrong all of them had been!

Later, after the Succos service, the fruit gathered around the essrog to congratulate him and the lulav, and to ask forgiveness from the essrog. The essrog was happy to forgive them. Then, Apple asked, "Is there something that we can do, so that we can be honored in the Succos service, too?" "Certainly", said Essrog, "see that Succah outside. You can help decorate it for us." So Apple, Pear, Banana, Mango, and all of the fruit ran outside to help decorate the Succah. If you saw them on your Succah just a few days ago, you understand now how they got there".