



There is a traditional ritual practice on Sukkot to “wave” the lulav, actually a combination of 4 plant species. Homiletically, they are often said to represent the diversity and unity of Am Yisrael (the Jewish people), different parts of the body-self, and/or different regions of Israel. I have always experienced the lulav as a ritual of drawing in and extending out from myself to the world. I reflect on what it means to do this on a holiday called “*zman simchateinu* - the time of our joy” while I stand in the Sukkah, which is a symbol of fragility and transience. This Sukkot, in a year when so much feels acutely fragile or broken, can this ritual help us open to love and joy? To support this intention, I share two poems below- one that I wrote, and one that I love, by Mary Oliver.

***Kavana* (Intention) for Waving the Lulav, Michal Fox Smart**

I will pick me a lulav, which has taste but not fragrance  
for moments I have spoken truth, without compassion.  
I will pick some Myrtle, which has smell but no taste  
for when I swallow my truth to avoid confrontation.  
I will lift up an Etrog, which has both taste and fragrance  
to celebrate when I manifest my true Self.  
I will grasp branches of Willow, which has neither  
for when I am adrift.

I will hold all four species  
in my hands

Extend myself  
Draw into myself  
In every direction

Truth and Compassion  
To love and accept love  
however whole  
however broken.



Institute for Jewish Spirituality™

Cultivating Mindfulness. Deepening Connection. Enlivening Jewish Life.

**Don't Hesitate, by Mary Oliver**

"If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give in to it. There are plenty of lives and whole towns destroyed or about to be. We are not wise, and not very often kind. And much can never be redeemed. Still, life has some possibility left. Perhaps this is its way of fighting back, that sometimes something happens better than all the riches or power in the world. It could be anything, but very likely you notice it in the instant when love begins. Anyway, that's often the case. Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb."