

## **Ta'am haMitzvah: *Why 'Arba Minim?***

### **Anthropologist from Mars**

1. In this class, we turn to a macro question: *Why?* What seems to be the point of this mitzvah? Let students offer their initial instincts.
2. Now turn to Vayikrah Rabbah. Assign each havrutah at least 1-2 of the midrashim, and have a representative summarize and evaluate each in a shared google-doc or other means of presentation). For each midrash, the students should correlate the species to its referent (eg. Lulav = God, or Yitzhak), and speculate (in writing) as to the meaning of that correlation. What is the message of each midrash?
3. With this midrashic background, turn now to an important piece from the Rambam in the Guide to the Perplexed. (The first paragraph is included to provide context). Note that first, the Rambam discusses three approaches (two of which he rejects, the third of which he champions) to interpreting midrashim in general.
4. For homework, assign the comments of Sefer ha-Hinukh 324, asking students to compare/contrast this approach with the other sources seen.

### **Further Reading**

For more sources on ta'amei hamitzvot in general see

[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0005\\_0\\_04543.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0005_0_04543.html), and  
<http://vbm-torah.org/archive/ramban/09ramban.htm>