

Guidelines regarding travel with the Arba Minim

Recently released by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP)



EXCERPT FROM THE TSA Notice

We are aware and respect that traveling practitioners of the Jewish faith may be wearing traditional clothing and headwear considered loose fitting and bulky, which may require additional screening. **Additional items that you may be carrying through the checkpoint for Sukkot may need additional time for screening and clearance.**

Planning Your Trip: Arrive early to allow time for security screening. Communicate your specific needs (e.g., religious headwear, sacred delicate/fragile items, sensitive items or body areas) to the TSA Officer before screening begins to have a smooth airport screening experience.

Some observant Jewish travelers may be carrying the four plants used during Sukkot – a palm branch, myrtle twigs, willow twigs, and a citron – in airports, through security checkpoints, or on airplanes. These plants or agricultural items are not on TSA's Prohibited Items List. However, all persons and property will undergo security screening at the checkpoint.



CBP Guidance

The estimated travel period for the Jewish holiday of Sukkot is approximately 7 days before and 7 days after the holiday. The holiday begins after sundown Oct. 16, 2024, until Oct. 23, 2024, after nightfall. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) understands that observant Jewish travelers entering the United States during the Sukkot holiday might carry religious items (ethrogs, palm fronds, twigs of willow and myrtle) in their vehicles if arriving at land border ports of entry, or in their personal baggage if they are arriving by aircraft. These items are regulated to prevent the introduction of invasive pests and diseases; however, these items might be allowed into the United States after inspection by CBP agriculture specialists (CBPAS). Thus, the following guidance is provided for travelers:

Ethrogs:

- Personal shipments of ethrogs are allowed entry through **North Atlantic and Northern Pacific ports** of entry after inspection by CBPAS. North Atlantic ports are defined as Atlantic ports north of and including Baltimore; ports on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway; Canadian border ports east of and including North Dakota; Andrews Air Force base and Washington, D.C. (including Dulles) for air shipments. Northern Pacific ports are defined as Pacific ports north of California including Alaska, Canadian border ports west of and including Montana, excluding Hawaii.

- Travelers will be asked to open the container with the ethrog and unwrap it. The CBP agriculture specialist will inspect the ethrog. If either stinger of an insect or pests are found, the ethrog will be prohibited from entering the United States. If neither is found, the traveler will be allowed to rewrap and re-box the ethrog for entry into the United States.

Palm Fronds:

- Single palm fronds, for religious purposes, will be inspected by CBPAS and released if no pests or symptoms of disease are found.

Twigs of Willow:

- If the twigs of willow are from Europe, they will be prohibited from entering the United States. If they are from locations other than Europe, they will be inspected by CBPAS and released if no pests or symptoms of disease are found.
- Also, if the twigs of willow are green in color, have soft tissue present, or have buds that sprouted, then the twigs of willow are capable of being grown and are prohibited from entering the United States.

Twigs of Myrtle:

- Twigs of myrtle will be inspected by CBPAS and released if no pests or symptoms of disease are found.

If travelers have any concerns resulting from the inspection of their religious items at a port of entry, a CBP Supervisor is always available to answer questions and address their concerns. As always, CBP is committed to treating all travelers, including travelers who may be observing Sukkot, with respect and dignity at all U.S. ports of entry.

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