

Agudah Advocacy Continues to Ease Way for Arba Minim

As in past years, Agudath Israel of America's Washington Office has worked closely with agencies of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to help avoid potential problems for travelers carrying arba minim.

Both the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have notified their respective field personnel about the upcoming Sukkos holiday and the increased level of travel by persons of the Jewish faith, many of whom will be carrying arba minim.

The notifications, which have been sent out to federal officials at airports and border crossings, emphasize the religious significance of these items and outline the rules and procedures that would help allay possible security and health issues that are of concern to the federal government. Prior to these agency steps, lack of familiarity regarding Sukkos and the arba minim had led to numerous incidents each year of inadvertent mishandling and mistreatment – including denial of entry – of these ritual objects.

The TSA Notice makes clear that the arba minim carried in airports, through security checkpoints or on aircraft, are not on the "prohibited items list" and provides instructions for travelers needing "special accommodations" in regard to checkpoint screening. The CBP Guidance sets forth detailed information regarding the inspection process for arba minim entering the United States from foreign countries through designated American ports and points out that the agency is "committed to treating all travelers, including travelers who may be observing Sukkot, with respect and dignity at all U.S. ports of entry."

“We are gratified by the ongoing sensitivity of these agencies to the religious concerns of our community,” said Rabbi Abba Cohen, Agudath Israel’s vice president for federal affairs and Washington director. “They are taking meaningful and appropriate steps to accommodate our religious needs.”

He also praised Rabbi A.D. Motzen, Agudath Israel’s national director of state relations, for once again producing a one-page handout (see above or [click here](#)) that travelers can print out – or save to their phones – to familiarize themselves with the rules before traveling.

For the TSA notice [click here](#)

For the CBP guidance [click here](#).

For a PDF of the 2016 Arba Minim Travel Guidelines [click here](#).

For a JPG of the 2016 Arba Minim Travel Guidelines [click here](#).

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