

Agudath Israel Advocacy Continues to Ease Way for Arba Minim

September 25, 2017



For the TSA notice [click here](#).

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

For a PDF of the 2017 Arba Minim Travel Guidelines [click here](#).

For a PNG of the 2017 Arba Minim Travel Guidelines [click here](#).

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.

TRAVELING THIS SUKKOS? HERE'S SOME **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Applicable for Sukkos 2017/5778

Distributed as a public service
by Agudath Israel of America

Guidelines regarding travel with the *Arba Minim*

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



Transportation
Security
Administration

EXCERPT FROM THE **TSA Notice**

Sukkot Plants: TSA's screening procedures do not prohibit the carrying of 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.

TSA Cares is a toll-free helpline, 1-855-787-2227 or Federal Relay #711, available for travelers to ask questions about screening or to request help at the checkpoint...If you would like to arrange assistance at the checkpoint, TSA recommends that you call at least 72 hours ahead of travel so that TSA Cares has the opportunity to coordinate checkpoint support. Checkpoint support may include coordination with a Passenger Support Specialist (PSS). Each airport has different resources; therefore, the level of assistance you receive at the checkpoint will vary...If you arrive at the checkpoint and have any concerns before, during, or after the screening process, you should immediately request to speak with a Supervisory Transportation Security Officer (STSO) or a PSS for assistance.

Planning Your Trip: Arrive early to allow time for security screening. Communicate your specific needs [e.g., accommodations, delicate/fragile items, sensitive body areas, assistance required] to each TSA Officer before screening begins to have a smooth airport screening experience. Those traveling in religious clothing or headwear may be considered to be wearing loose-fitting clothing or headwear and may be subject to additional screening at the TSA security checkpoints, possibly including a pat-down.



U.S. Customs and
Border Protection

CBP Guidance

The travel period for the holiday is Sep. 17 through Oct. 20. The holiday begins after sundown on Oct. 4 and ends after nightfall on Oct. 11. CBP understands that observant travelers entering the United States during the Sukkot holiday might carry religious items in their vehicles if arriving at land border ports of entry or in their personal baggage if 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. These items include ethrogs, palm fronds, twigs of willow and myrtle. **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 CBP Agriculture Specialists. 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, 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 agriculture specialist will inspect the ethrog. If either insect stings 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 agriculture specialists 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 other than Europe, they will be inspected by agriculture specialists 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 they are capable of being grown and are prohibited from entering the United States.

Twigs of Myrtle:

- Twigs of myrtle will be inspected by agriculture specialists 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.

Agudath Israel of America

42 Broadway
New York, NY 10004
constituentservices@agudathisrael.org
212-797-9000

