

Arba Minim

September 2021

Lulav and Esrog for Succos

based on Timely Torah by

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Selection

A complete set of “*arba minim*” used for *Succos* includes one lulav (palm frond), one esrog (citron fruit), three hadassim (myrtle branches), and two aravos (willow branches).

Lulav

A lulav consists of multiple leaves that are attached to a hard, green spine. Three leaves protrude from the top of the spine and the central one of them is called the *tiyomes*. Although not readily apparent, the *tiyomes* is comprised of two separate halves which grow adjacent/fused to one another.

As the lulav matures, the two halves of the *tiyomes* often start to separate. But the ideal lulav has the *tiyomes* halves still completely stuck together. If the majority of the *tiyomes*’ length have split into two parts the lulav is invalid. If only the minority of it is split, the lulav is still kosher but is not *mehudar* (ideal). In either case, if the *tiyomes* appears forked at its tip or if the tip has been severed, the lulav is invalid.



Ideally, a lulav should have a spine that is at least 16 inches long, but its minimum permitted length is 13 inches.

Esrog

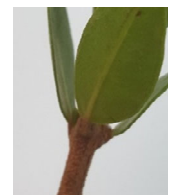
The most important part of an esrog is the entire top of the fruit starting from where it begins to slope upwards. Any black spots in this area invalidate the esrog, but light brown spots do not. On the rest of the esrog, the esrog is kosher unless there are multiple black spots depending on size and location. When in doubt, show the esrog to a Rabbi [it is inadvisable to attempt to remove the spots yourself as this can possibly render the esrog invalid].

The uppermost tip of an esrog often has a small woody stem called a “pittum”. If the pittum falls off after an esrog is formed, the esrog is invalid, but if the esrog grew without a pittum then the esrog is kosher.

Hadassim

Ideally, each hadas twig should be at least 12 inches long (excluding the leaves) but its minimum permitted length is 9.5 inches.

The leaves of a hadas grow in clusters along the stem, and when the base of all three leaves are aligned, that cluster is called “*meshulash*”. A choice hadas has at least 12 inches of stem covered with *meshulash* leaves, but at a minimum there must be 5 inches of *meshulash* clusters.



Aravos

Each aravah twig should be at least 12 inches long but its minimum permitted length is 9.5 inches. If the majority of the leaves have dried out or fallen off, the aravah should not be used. [Due to this, aravos often have to be replaced once or twice during Succos]. If the top of an aravah's stem is severed, the aravah is invalid.

Use

Before Succos, bind the hadassim and aravos to the lulav. With the spine of the lulav facing you, place the three hadassim on the right of the lulav, and the two aravos on the left. Traditionally, a holder of detached lulav leaves (called "koisheklach" and supplied by the lulav merchant) is used, but if that is not available, you can rip off a leaf from the lulav and tie it using that, or even tie it with a rubber band.

On each of the seven days of Succos – aside from Shabbos – hold the lulav, hadassim, and aravos in your right hand with the spine facing you, and the esrog in your left hand with the pittum facing downwards. Then recite the bracha (found in any siddur), turn the esrog over so that the pittum faces upwards, bring your hands close together, and shake the lulav etc. as follows. Extend your hand forward, shake the lulav, and pull your hand back towards your body. Repeat this shaking two more times. Then perform the same three shaking movements to your right side, behind you, to your left, above your head, and finally towards the floor (keeping the lulav pointing upright throughout). In total, that is 3 shakes in 6 directions, for 18 total shaking movements. [Some people reorder the six directions as follows: right, left, front, up, down, and then back].

If you have a lulav and esrog in shul (and it is not Shabbos), you will perform the same shaking procedure at specific times during Hallel and will also circle the Torah with your lulav etc. during "hoshanos". Details for those parts of the service can be found in a Siddur.

Women are exempt from the mitzvah of lulav and esrog but, of course, they are permitted to perform it and may recite a bracha upon doing so.

On the first two days of Succos, the lulav etc. must belong to the person who is performing the mitzvah. Therefore, if a person does not own a set, they must receive the lulav etc. as a gift from the owner. The lulav etc. can be returned to the original owner once the mitzvah has been performed.