The *Etrog* in Rabbinic and Kabbalistic Literature

**In Antiquity**

During the festival of Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) one must take (in Talmudic language ‘*litol*’) the four species mentioned in Leviticus 23:40, which according to the rabbinic tradition are the *etrog* (citron), *lulav* (palm frond), *hadas* (myrtle), and *arava* (willow). These were discussed in the Talmud and Midrashim in a myriad of ways,[[1]](#footnote-1) some of which we shall elaborate on below.

It appears that in ancient times the *etrog* flourished in the Land of Israel. At some point the *etrog* was considered edible as any other fruit, and the *terumot* (the gift to the priest) and tithes of the *etrog* were set aside. Evidence of the *etrog*’s prevalence can be adduced from the account that “all the people pelted with their *etrog*s” anyone who performed the Temple water libation like a Sadducee (Sukka 4:9). In one letter, Bar Kokhva demands that his military camp be provided with “*Lulav*s, *etrog*s…*hadasim* and *aravot*.”[[2]](#footnote-2) The four species were embossed on the Hasmonean and Bar Kokhva coins, embroidered on *parokhet*s (curtains that cover synagogue arks), depicted in mosaic synagogues floors, and in later periods also on tombstones. Thus, the species were treated as sacred objects. The Roman rulers were aware of this, and they forbade the *netila* (taking the four species) as they forbade other practices like circumcision. As it is written, “Why did you receive a hundred lashes? Because I took the *lulav*.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Bible mentions “*peri etz hadar* (the fruit of beautiful trees),” which is understood in the rabbinic literature as *etrog*.[[4]](#footnote-4) Different sources connect the two references. Nahmanides wrote in his commentary on Leviticus 23:40:

The tree is called *etrog* in the Aramaic tongue, and in the holy tongue it is called *hadar*, for the meaning of *etrog* is *hemda* (desirability), as it is translated “*nehmad le-mare’e*” (pleasing to the eye) – “*demerageg le-mehazei*” [Aramaic] “*lo tahmod*” (you shall not covet) – “*lo tarog*” [Aramaic]…and the tree and the fruit were called one name, as is common with most fruit: fig, nut, pomegranate, olive and others. And here as well—the name of the tree and the fruit are both in Aramaic: “*etrog*,” and in the holy tongue: “*hadar*.”

The sages often discuss the beauty of the *etrog* and its external shape. *Etrog* size is discussed as early as the Mishna, and as summarized by R. Israel Lipschitz, “A *mehudar* (beautiful) *etrog* has five conditions” (cleanliness, many bumps along its surface, indented stipe [*oketz*], a whole stigma [*shoshanta*] facing the stipe). Moreover, it was decided that the species should be held “as they grew.”[[5]](#footnote-5) In other words, one is to hold the *etrog* with its stipe on the bottom and the *pitam* (blossom end) on top. Indeed, the Rabbi of Altona, R. Jacob Ettlinger, questioned whether European emigres fulfill the commandment with four species grown on the “American islands and Australia,” for the residents of those countries have their legs opposite our legs.[[6]](#footnote-6) He eventually concluded that it is “probable” that it is permissible since the fruits are actually grown in this way.

It is possible that the word *hadar* was associated with the Greek “*hydor*” which means water. Thus, the commentator emphasized and reinforced the element of water which is essential to growing the four species, and which symbolizes the dawn of the agricultural period that required rainwater. This insight contributed to the motif of the female connection to water, which is the foundation of the masculine *Hessed* (grace).

Homilies often connect the exterior appearance of the four species to specific parts of the human body, reinforcing the affinity of nature, man, and the earth.

Various Midrashim offer an implicit linguistic connection between the four species and temple worship, emphasizing their importance and sanctity.[[7]](#footnote-7) For example, the verb “*leratzot*” (to appease) appears in the Torah in connection with sacrifices,[[8]](#footnote-8) and in the Talmud regarding the four species: “As it is taught: From when does one mention the rains? Rabbi Eliezer says: From the time that one takes the *lulav*. Rabbi Yehoshua says: From the time that one puts it down. Rabbi Eliezer said: It is because these four species come only to offer appeasement for water.” (Ta’anit 2b) We should note the unique interpretation of the word *hadar*: “Rabbi says: Do not read *hadar* [meaning beautiful], but rather *hadir* [meaning sheep pen]. **Just as in this pen** there are large and small, **unblemished and blemished** [sheep], so too, this [tree] has large and small, **unblemished and blemished** [fruits].”[[9]](#footnote-9) And most explicitly in the following homily:

“Rabbi Abbahu said that Rabbi Elazar said: Anyone **who takes a *lulav*** in its binding and a myrtle branch in its thickly-leaved form [*avoto*], the verse ascribes him credit **as though he built an altar and sacrificed an offering upon it,** as it is stated: ‘Bind with thickly-leaved branches [*ba’avotim*] on the Festival until the horns of the altar.’ (Ps.118:27)”[[10]](#footnote-10)

We find additional motifs among medieval sages. For example:

By way of *peshat* [simple meaning]: These four species grow near water and require watering more than other fruit. For this reason we were commanded on the festival of Sukkot, which is the time of water libation and the day of judgment for the year’s rainfall,[[11]](#footnote-11) to appease the Holy One Blessed be He for water with those four species that indicate water.[[12]](#footnote-12)

This sage-Kabbalist, who was the rabbi of Saragossa in Spain, offers a simple and natural interpretation and adds in the spirit of the Midrash:

This is what they said in the Midrash: *Etrog* resembles the heart, *lulav* the spine, *hadasim* the eyes, *aravot* the lips.[[13]](#footnote-13) This means that when a person fails by the sins of these parts of the body, he is found to deny these four species that correspond to them and resemble them, for with every sin one finds redemption when a person fulfills the corresponding commandment.[[14]](#footnote-14)

This means that the connection to body parts—and one can certainly say central parts by which a person functions, for better or worse—carries with it important psychological-religious values. In this case there appears to be a tendency toward equilibrium, the calculation of a commandment against its loss.

Not far off is the *Sefer Ha-Hinukh* (commandment 324), which puts forward another idea following a principle that it reiterates:

A person is activated through his consistent actions, and his ideas and thoughts are grasped following the actions of his hands, whether good or bad. Because the days of the festival are days of great joy to Israel since it is the time of harvesting the grain and the fruits of the trees into the home…and because joy greatly draws matter and causes one to forget the fear of God in that time, we were commanded by God to take things in our hands that remind us that all of the joy in our hearts is for His name and glory.

In other words, the physical performance of the commandment is meant to expand religious consciousness precisely at a time when there is danger of falling into the material world. He immediately continues and adds another idea, that the four species/body parts have a symbolic general external meaning, but also a specific internal one: “These four species have another matter, which is that they resemble the primary parts of a person’s body. The *etrog* resembles the heart which is the home of the intellect, alluding that one should worship one’s creator with one’s intellect,” etc. This indicates that intellectual examination is a necessary and integral part of the worship of God. The midrashic notion of corresponding the species to certain body parts therefore took on various forms and changed over the years.

Medieval philosophical literature was generally satisfied with whatever was brought up in rabbinic homilies. Maimonides noted three characteristics: (a) that they are found abundantly in the Land of Israel; (b) that they are beautiful and fresh, the *etrog* and *hadas* even give off sweet fragrance; and (c) that they stay fresh for all seven days of the holiday.[[15]](#footnote-15)

**In Kabbalah**

Kabbalistic literature also makes use of these rabbinic Midrashim and adapts them according to its values and requirements, even reinforcing what is said in rabbinic literature. For example, according to one of the opinions in the Midrash,[[16]](#footnote-16) the fruit eaten by Adam was the *etrog*. According to Rabbeinu Bahya,[[17]](#footnote-17) taking the *etrog* alongside the three other species is done to rectify Adam’s sin. In his words: “And through this we shall be awakened to the unification, for our first father *kitzetz* (separated) and sinned with the *etrog* alone.[[18]](#footnote-18) We do not bring the *etrog* alone, but rather we bring it with the other fruit to unify it with them all, and with that we rectify his falsification, and appease God.”

Moreover, the midrashic correspondence of the *etrog* to the heart is often repeated among Kabbalists. “It resembles the heart”;[[19]](#footnote-19) and “The fruit of *hadar* tree resembles the heart and alludes to the *kavod* (glory) that is made up of the thirty-two paths, and it is more *hadar* than any *hadar*.”[[20]](#footnote-20) This means that the *etrog* symbolizes not only the human heart, as stated in the Midrash, but also the Divine sefirotic world, alluded to as usual with the word *kavod*. As we shall see presently, this has a particular connection with the feminine image. But first the words of R. Moshe ben Makhir, a Sefadian Kabbalist: “The matter of *etrog* is that it has a taste and smell, it is beautiful to look at and good to eat, and it resembles the human heart, that must be beautiful, good, and clean from any lichen or flaw—alluding that man must be clean of any blemish and clear of any evil thought.”[[21]](#footnote-21)

The word “*etrog*” was often interpreted with Aramaic, where the root רגג (*RGG*) means חמד (*HMD*—covet/desire). For example, the tenth commandment, “Thou shalt not covet,” was translated as “*la tirog*,” linking this word to the coveted feminine. The word “*hadar*,” as in beauty, added to the feminine desirability. Thus, the feminine meaning of the *etrog* was already reinforced among early Kabbalists.[[22]](#footnote-22) Even if we find differing opinions regarding the symbolism of the three other species,[[23]](#footnote-23) they are unanimous when it comes to the *etrog*.[[24]](#footnote-24)

“*Etrog* is the lower *Shekhina*, it resembles the heart which is on the left, which is *Gevura* (strength), and for this reason a person must take the *etrog* in his left hand.”[[25]](#footnote-25) This author binds three motifs together: the *etrog* symbolizes the *Shekhina*, the lowest *sefira* in the sefirotic constellation, also called *midat ha-din ha-rafa* (the soft attribute of judgment); the *etrog* resembles the human heart which is on the left side, symbolizing the *sefira* of *Gevura* in the sefirotic constellation, also called *midat ha-din ha-kasha* (the hard attribute of judgment). Halakhic reasoning derives from all this that one must take the *etrog* in the left hand so as to rectify *Gevura*. This appears to be a series of symbolic gestures, but an additional meaning is offered elsewhere: “By way of the Kabbalah, it (the tree from which Adam ate) was the *etrog* alluded to in Scripture, as it is written ‘desirable to make one wise,’ translated by Onkelos ‘*umargag*,’ for it is desirable and beautiful and its temperament is hot and it rules the intellect.”[[26]](#footnote-26) In other words, Adam sinned because the *etrog*, the heat temperament, took over his intellect. And thus the lesson: to impose the intellect on the heart (a central motif in R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi’s *Tanya*).

The reasoning behind the unsuitability of certain *etrog* blemishes is offered in another place in the *Tikkunei zohar*: “For it resembles the *Shekhina*, about whom it is said, ‘You are altogether beautiful, my love; you have no flaw.’”[[27]](#footnote-27) The feminine comparison itself demands aesthetic perfection. For example: “And if she is yellow her image is more excellent, because Esther was *yerakroket* (yellow) for it is said of her ‘and Esther dressed in *Malkhut* (royal robes)’ etc.”[[28]](#footnote-28) The yellow shade discussed in the Talmud is integrated with kabbalistic motifs (the word *Malkhut* in the verse once transposed takes on the meaning of the *sefira*).

The resemblance to the lowest *sefira* and femininity has another expression:

The *etrog* is their entirety, just as the garden includes the saplings…and therefore she had to be composed of all of them, so that she can receive them since their actions are enacted through her. And from this we can understand Nahmanides’ intention in saying that she is not with them in unity, despite being with them in emanation, which is that although they are all called “saplings,” she is different because she is called “garden.” And this is because she is the combination of their entirety, and therefore her unity is not like their unity.[[29]](#footnote-29)

The lowest *sefira* is considered one of the *sefirot*, but she contains them all within her, as a woman who carries different fetuses and different identities within her womb. Thirteenth-century Kabbalists, therefore, called her “the image of all images.” For this reason the feminine lower *etrog* serves as an illustration and a model for the supernal sefirotic reality. We can thus understand the following:

This fruit is desirable to look at because all of the supernal visions and all of the specula are seen in this fruit. Alternatively, it is called “fruit” because it receives the fruits of the supernal world, which is a deep river[[30]](#footnote-30) wherein the fruit grow that are the souls of the righteous surrounding the deep river, and those fruit grow on the trees that were planted around the river.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Without delving into its kabbalistic significance I will briefly summarize this passage. In Kabbalah, the soul is compared to a bird or a fruit springing forth from a tree, and generally serves as symbol for *Tiferet* (beauty) or *Yesod* (foundation). Both of these *sefirot*, which symbolize the masculine, are closely tied to the last feminine *sefira*. This is the *sefira* that in the above passage is represented by a river in which the trees and saplings grow. The *etrog* is thus a “central figure” of the four species. This idea is further explicated by the same Kabbalist:

If you would say “why is the *etrog* not bound[[32]](#footnote-32) to the other species in a single bundle?” It is already known that the *etrog* is *Knesset Yisrael* (the Jewish people) who stands outside of the curtain, as it were, and she was distressed and fraught from the King’s house for not having her own image, only what others give her, and therefore in this regard she is not even a *sefira*. But regarding the unification, she includes them all, as we learned: their end was fixed in their beginning and their beginning in their end. Therefore when one takes the *lulav*, when shaking it, one should connect the *etrog* to the *lulav* so as to proclaim the unification and supernal union which exists during these days. For throughout the seven days of this festival there is a union of the King and his Lady. Therefore, every Jew must appear joyful during these days because it is a time of joy above and below. Thus anyone who makes himself joyful during this festival adds supernal and lower joy.[[33]](#footnote-33)

The beginning of this passage can be understood according to our earlier discussion, but the author adds and expounds upon the requirement brought by Kabbalists from the thirteenth century and on: that one must bind the four species together while reciting the blessing and while shaking, thereby instilling in one’s consciousness the idea of unification—the human (as in the Midrash) but also the Divine (as in Kabbalah). This is thereby tied to the commandment of joy, typical of the festival of Sukkotin Scripture: “And you shall rejoice in your feast.” (Deut. 16:14) And the joy is “above and below.” R. Moshe de Leon also wrote that the union of the species brings about joy, which explains the connection of joy to this festival.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Again, another talmudic homily received a typical kabbalistic revision:

And may they be blessed said, “Any who fulfills the *lulav* in its binding, and myrtle in its thickly-leaved form it is as though he constructed an altar and made an offering,” meaning that the offering [*korban*] draws near [*mekarev*] the spiritual powers.[[35]](#footnote-35) Thus the *lulav* in its binding and myrtle in its thickly-leaved form, are the supernal archetypesand they connect the tent to be one, and tie them to the supernal place as a flame in coal. And the author of this account only alluded to *lulav* and myrtle and willow bound with the *lulav*, but he did not mention the *etrog*. And it is with them and they are with it, but it is not always bound with them and therefore it is alone for it is bound during certain times according to the supernal will.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The *etrog* is not explicitly mentioned in the talmudic homily, but it is alluded to for “it is with them and they are with it.” The connection between the lower feminine *sefira* and those above her is not constant, but only “during certain times,” according to circumstances and according to the dictation of kabbalistic literature. Nevertheless, there is a yearning for unification.

For more on the linking of the *lulav* to the *etrog*, and in further detail, we shall read the following passage by sixteenth century Kabbalist R. David ben Zimra:

The *etrog* is not bound with them, as noted in the secret that we wrote a number of times—that she is emanated from them but is not united with them, and for that reason she must be individualized and conjoined with them. One must grasp the binding with the right and the *etrog* with the left and conjoin both hands and shake so as to draw down the influx from the spiritual world to the world of the *binyan* (the sefirotic structure) alluded to with the *lulav*, and from there to the world of *Malkhut* (kingdom) alluded to with the *etrog*, and from there to all the chariots and angels and spheres to the sublunary world.[[37]](#footnote-37)

And more concisely: “*Hessed* and myrtle are all one, for the letters ACHH‘A are switched, and *etrog* is derived from the language of ‘desired,’ translated as ‘for it was desirable to the eye’ – *mergag*. ‘Neither shall you lust,’ ‘neither shall you *tirog*,’ in the language of *etrog* to allude that the supernal world desires this attribute to emanate into it and the lower world to receive from it.”[[38]](#footnote-38) This expresses the central status of the *etrog*-*Shekhina*: the *sefirot* above her emanate into her, and the lower worlds imbibe from her and receive their existence from her. Thus, when a person takes the *etrog* and *lulav* he assists the *Shekhina* in fulfilling her role.

An additional halakhic detail, that the *lulav* must be bound at its head, received a symbolic-mystical meaning as an allusion to the supernal *sefira* being bound with the entire sefirotic constellation without separation.

Therefore the *lulav*, which is *Tiferet*, must be bound on high with *Keter Elyon*, so that it unites and is bound with the supernal *sefirot* so that they all become one bundle (*aguda*), as it is written “And he has founded his strata (*agudato*) on the earth.” Therefore, the tradition of some *Hasidim* is to bind the head of the *lulav* above to allude to *Keter Elyon* which is bound and tied by the cause of causes, which has no division or *kitzutz* (separation). Rather, everything is perfect to the highest perfection so that all should resemble the supernal archetype.[[39]](#footnote-39)

We thus have a “halakhic” detail whose performance reflects the kabbalistic doctrine of essential affinity between the supernal and lower worlds.

Alongside the feminine image is the spiritual image. The *etrog* symbolizes the yearning for the apprehension of intelligibles:

“And the tree was desired to make one wise,” for the soul (*neshama*) enjoys the good smell, as they, may their memory be a blessing, said, “Let everything that has breath (*neshama*) praise the Lord” – the thing that the soul enjoys is smell,[[40]](#footnote-40) and for this reason we bless smell. And this is “and the tree is desirable,” for from the soul’s enjoyment of smell she apprehends the intelligibles, as it is said, “how pleasing is your fragrance,” and the translation of “thou shall not lust” – shall not *tirog*, which is like an *etrog* that is fragrant.[[41]](#footnote-41)

We also find that the commandment to be joyful is emphasized in the eighteenth century, with new ritual elements:

During the last third of the night of the first day of the festival, one should prepare oneself to fulfill the positive commandment from the Torah of taking the four species…And one should first check if there is first light and then bless the *lulav* specifically in the Sukka. Thus wrote the AR”I (R. Isaac Luria), may his memory be a blessing, according to a great secret: the blessing on the *lulav* with shaking should be performed specifically in the Sukka, and this is the custom of those who respect and fear God’s word. Before blessing one should recite “*leshem yihud”* (for the unification of..) etc. with tremendous intention (*kavana*) and pray a brief prayer as though he intended with all the intentions intended by the Men of the Great Assembly. And one should bless the blessing of the *lulav* with tremendous joy and offer up a tremendous thanksgiving prayer to our Creator may His name be blessed that he granted us, the holy congregation, this grand commandment.[[42]](#footnote-42)

**In Folklore**

In folklore as well we find material on the *etrog*. Our sages said: “One who sees an *etrog* in a dream—he is *hadur* (beautiful) before his maker, as it is written: *peri etz hadar*.”[[43]](#footnote-43) The affinity between the *etrog* and *hadar* appears here again, and *hadar* is interpreted to mean *hadur* (beautiful) before God.

There are those who kiss the *etrog* before fulfilling the *mitzvah* (commandment) and afterwards.[[44]](#footnote-44) It appears that this was an ancient custom, for already Meir of Rothenburg (1220-1293) opposed it “those people who kiss it [the *etrog*], they cannot find their hands and feet and I call them ‘the fool walks in the dark.’”[[45]](#footnote-45) We also find the opposite position, as testified by Isaiah Horowitz: “I saw some *bnei aliyah* (sons of ascent) who love *mitzvot*, kissing the *matzot* and the *maror* and all of the *mitzvot* when they were to be performed, and also the Sukkah when entering and exiting as well as the four species of the *lulav*, and all out of love for the *mitzvot*…blessed is he who serves God with joy and a good heart.[[46]](#footnote-46)

Because of the love of the *mitzvah* it was decided that it would be forbidden to throw them into the trash, or to step on them, or to treat them in any other demeaning way.[[47]](#footnote-47)

There was also a warning not to rub the *etrog*,[[48]](#footnote-48) so that it not be harmed or damaged, and even for the purpose of the *mitzvah* it should not be carried without enclosure, without a hemp or wool cover.[[49]](#footnote-49)

There were those who hung the *etrog* as a Sukka decoration.[[50]](#footnote-50)

It is customary to place a piece of *etrog* in the perfume box, so as to bless it after the Sabbath, *Boreh minei besamim* (the creator of types of perfume). On its fragrance, during the week one blesses: “Blessed that he imbibed a sweet fragrance in fruit.” And during Sukkot, “If one uses myrtle for *sekhakh* (branches used for the Sukka roof) or hangs an *etrog* as a Sukka decoration, it is permitted to smell it.”[[51]](#footnote-51) Thus in the *minhag* literature: “It is permitted to smell the *etrog* used for a *mitzvah*. There are those who say that one should bless ‘*Asher natan reah tov ba-perot* (that he imbibed a sweet smell in fruit)’ and there are those who say that one should not make the blessing.”[[52]](#footnote-52)And thus in the poem: “Seven days it is forbidden to smell the myrtle but it is not forbidden to smell the *etrog*, the first day was allotted for this *mitzvah*, and therefore eating it is avoided.”[[53]](#footnote-53) In other words, it is forbidden to eat the *etrog* during Sukkot, but it is permitted to smell it.

In order to preserve and use the fragrance, the *etrog* is customarily wrapped in linen or hemp which absorbs the smell from the eve of the festival.[[54]](#footnote-54) There is a custom among women to place *etrog*s in closets to perfume them.

There are those who eat *etrogs* (mixed with honey or other ingredients) for health.[[55]](#footnote-55) There was once a king from across the sea who was healed from a stomach illness by eating *etrogs*.[[56]](#footnote-56) Others viewed it as a folk remedy for heart disease, since, as already discussed, the *etrog* corresponds to the heart.

“One who becomes mute and his ability for speech is taken from him, may God help us, should place a rind of an *etrog* in his mouth and he will see wonders.”[[57]](#footnote-57) “It (the *etrog*) is a *segula* (charm) for protecting the home to be saved from all tragedy, and also from any sin.” In other words, physical and spiritual protection.[[58]](#footnote-58)

Sages disputed whether before eating it one was obliged to bless *shehehyanu*, and various arguments were raised. I will suffice with a single source, which contains a number of details:

On the *etrog* the Rabbi “*peri ha’adama*” testified that it is customary to bless *shehehyanu* in the Holy City of Jerusalem, may it be rebuilt speedily in our days, eaten on the second night of Rosh ha-Shana in place of a new fruit. In our city (Baghdad), may God protect it, the *etrog* is sweet but is not easily found, and it is the custom in our home to eat an *etrog* before Yom Tov of the festival of Sukkot and bless *shehehyanu*. But our congregation does not customarily eat it before Sukkot, only on Tu bi’Shvat when they are brought to the market. Those who buy an *etrog* to shake, put it aside until Tu bi’Shvat and eat it, and they need not bless *shehehyanu*.[[59]](#footnote-59)

In various places there was the custom to make jam out the *etrog* or dry it and put it aside for Tu bi’Shvat, the New Year for the trees.[[60]](#footnote-60) This jam was given to any woman experiencing a difficult birth, so as to open her womb.

Indeed, it was viewed especially as a charm for women. A pregnant woman was advised to eat *etrog* so as to be blessed with a sweet-smelling child, as it is written in the Talmud: “One who eats *etrog* will have sweet-smelling children.”[[61]](#footnote-61) It is recounted there that the wife of the King of Shapur ate an *etrog* while she was pregnant and had a sweet-smelling daughter.

Over the course of history, the biting of the *pitam* as a charm for easy births was emphasized. A pregnant woman bites the *pitam* after the prayers on the day of *Hoshana Rabba*, when one is halakhically no longer permitted use the *etrog*:

I saw in a manuscript book that pregnant women would customarily take the *etrog* on *Hoshana Rabba*[[62]](#footnote-62) and remove the *pitemet*. After removing the *pitemet* they distribute alms for the poor, each one according to her ability, and have intentions that the Holy One may He be blessed will save her during labor and that the baby should live…and then they prayed the following prayer: “Master of the universe, it is revealed and known before you that because Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge her sin brought death into the world and pain of childbearing. If I were there at that time I would not have eaten from it nor would I have taken pleasure in it at all, just as I had no desire to disqualify this *etrog* during all the days of the festival that has now passed, for I disqualified it only because its *mitzvah* ended…Receive with desire my prayer etc.[[63]](#footnote-63)

In order to popularize this prayer among pregnant women, it was translated by R. Hayyim Palachi’s son, R. Abraham, in his book *Hokhiah Avraham*, Chapter 24. Among Ashkenazic groups a special *tehina* (supplication) (in Yiddish) was established for a woman biting the *etrog*’s *pitemet*. However, in Ashkenaz, women would customarily wait until after the festival. It is worth noting that in the above passage, the biting of the *pitam* is accompanied by giving alms as an additional *segula*.

Another idea raised in this prayer is that beyond the symbolism of severing the *pitam*, the very biting of the *pitam* which renders the *etrog* unusable, is done for the rectification of the sin of Adam and Eve, since the tree they ate from “was an *etrog*” (Genesis Rabbah 15:8), “If I were there at that time I would not have eaten from it.”

It is accepted among women that the easier the removal of the *pitam* with one’s teeth, the easier the birth. Among the Sefardi community there are those who make sure to eat seven *pitamim* of *etrog*s that were blessed during Sukkot for an easy birth.

Over the course of history, we find literary expressions for evaluating etrogs. Two verses from Psalm 19 are explained: “‘Rejoicing the Heart’—this is an *etrog* that resembles the heart. ‘The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes’—this is the *etrog*.”[[64]](#footnote-64)

There are those among the Hasidim who noted the acronym of the *etrog* (ETRG): *E’muna* (faith), *T’eshuva* (repentance), *R’efua* (health), *G’eula* (redemption),[[65]](#footnote-65) highlighting the values connected to the *etrog*.

Similarly, the *gematria* (numerical value) of *etrog* is 610. If you add the other three species you get 613. Moreover, the author of the *Turim* on Leviticus 20:20 writes that “*peri etz hadar*” adds up in *gematria* to “*etrogim*.”

One of the hasidic giants writes: “We received the tradition from our rabbis to pray on Tu bi’Shvat for a kosher, beautiful, and glorified *etrog*, that would be summoned by *Hashem*, may He be blessed, at the time requiring the *mitzvah*.”[[66]](#footnote-66) Indeed, R. Yosef Hayyim of Baghdad composed a special prayer for Tu bi’Shvat for the success of the *etrog*. In his introduction to this prayer he writes: “It is known that there is a tradition among the *Hakhmei Ashkenaz*, may their memory be a blessing, to request specifically on Tu bi’Shvat that Israel should receive a good and beautiful *etrog* for the festival.” Incidentally, the *etrog* receives a specific prayer in addition to the other fruit trees: “May it be Your will…that You bless all the *etrog* trees to fruit at the correct time…that You bless all kinds of trees to fruit with abundant oils and goodness,” etc.[[67]](#footnote-67)

**In the Community**

As is well known, in the cold climates of Northern and Eastern Europe it is impossible to grow *etrogs*, and our forefathers who inhabited those countries were dependent on imports from Mediterranean lands, especially Italy and Greece. This caused a medley of difficulties. Nevertheless, our forefathers pursued the *etrog* in general, and beautiful and prime *etrogs* in particular, oftentimes to the point of *mesirat nefesh* (self-sacrifice).

Among Ashkenazi Jews there was an honorary post of “*etroger*,” a professional versed in the qualities of the four species and the relevant halakha, and a reliable judge of their kosher status (with regard to grafting and similar issues). This honorary post occasionally brought with it remuneration, and sometimes was accompanied by instances of fighting, lawsuits, and competition among the different contenders for this post.[[68]](#footnote-68) In many communities there were special organizations that dispatched messengers overseas beforehand to make the purchases on their behalf. Thus, for example, “*Hevra Lulav”* took care of obtaining the four species for the community.[[69]](#footnote-69) In Bulgaria there was a custom to purchase the “*mitzvah* that credits the public,” and the buyer would allow anyone to use it.

Indeed, many wonderful tales are recounted about the giants of Israel, hasidic masters, Hasidim, mithnagedim, miracle workers, and the like, who used various methods to obtain the four species. There are those who sold valuable items in return, and even renounced their place in the World to Come for the performance of this *mitzvah*.[[70]](#footnote-70) The Jews of Yemen did not communally fulfill this *mitzvah*—rather, every person purchased his own species, even at a great price.[[71]](#footnote-71)

Sometimes they had to make do with a single *etrog*, as evidenced by R. Meir of Rothenburg: “They were accustomed to purchase an *etrog* together with the small coins of the community, and it would be gifted to the one blessing so that he would fulfill the *mitzvah*. And when finished, he would gift it to a friend, and his friend to another friend, as we hold: a gift given with the intention of its return is called a gift.”[[72]](#footnote-72)

However, this collaboration created an ironic situation: Rabbi Israel Isserlin, among the great Ashkenazi rabbis of the fifteenth century, was posed a question regarding an occurrence wherein a number of villages had only one *etrog* between them for the festival *mitzvah*, so “they cut the *etrog* into a few pieces and sent a piece to each town.”[[73]](#footnote-73)

These difficulties caused inflated prices and price gouging, leading to conflict. This was not the first time that prices were raised for a *mitzvah*, another example being phylacteries. It is known that R. Isaac Luria was accustomed to do so, and paid what was demanded.[[74]](#footnote-74) Also in Talmud Sukka 41b, there is an account of Rabban Gamliel who purchased an *etrog* for 1000 *zuz*. This custom, particularly with regard to the *etrog*, incited a fierce controversy on the part of the Mabit (Moses ben Joseph di Trani), who was concerned about the price increase.[[75]](#footnote-75) The tension between the desire to beautify the *mitzvah* while ignoring the cost, and concern regarding the price increases and the financial burden on the public, has continued into later generations and remains unresolved.[[76]](#footnote-76) In any case, regarding those who sold at inflated prices and gloated over their fancy *etrogim*, the Kabbalists intoned *Al* *Tvoeni* *Regel* *Ga’ava* (“May the foot of the proud not come against me”) (Ps. 36:12)—acronym ETRoG.[[77]](#footnote-77)

However, of interest is the following ruling: “According to the *Holy* *Zohar*, in *Teruma*, one must not bless an *etrog* received without payment, for the *kelipot* (husks) suckle from *mitzvot* that are received without payment.”[[78]](#footnote-78) Thus, a *mitzvah* should not be performed offhandedly, but rather with invested effort.

**Joining the Species**

In the Baraita it says:

Rabbi Eliezer said to him: I might have thought that the *etrog* should be bound with the other species in one bundle. You could say: Does it say “The fruit of a beautiful tree and branches of a date palm”? But it says only “branches” [meaning, without the *vav* conjunction] And from where is it derived that failure to take each of the species prevents fulfillment of the *mitzva* with the others? The verse states: “And you shall take [*ulkaḥtem*],” that it shall be a complete taking [*lekiḥa tamma*].[[79]](#footnote-79)

According to the Talmud, Sukka 37b, the *lulav* binds with it the myrtle and the willow but the *etrog* remains separate. One is required to take all four species while making the blessing because failure to take one of them would prevent the fulfillment of the *mitzvah*, and in this respect they function as one bundle.[[80]](#footnote-80)

The *lulav* together with the myrtle and the willow are taken with the right hand, while the *etrog* is taken with the left.[[81]](#footnote-81) Thus Maimonides ruled: “The *mitzvah* according to the halakha is to lift up the bundle of the three species with the right hand and the *etrog* with the left.”[[82]](#footnote-82) Also other halakhic sages did not require binding the four species together. For example, R. Levi son of David of Narbonne in the second half of the thirteenth century explicitly wrote, “If one takes both with one hand…did not fulfill [the *mitzvah*].”[[83]](#footnote-83) Also in other halakhic works, such as *Tur*, *Ha-manhig*, *Ha-eshkol*, *Ha-ora*, *Ha-agur* and more, there is no mention of a requirement to bind the four species together while reciting the blessing or while shaking.

In the school of the students of Nahmanides’ student, R. Shlomo ibn Aderet, they concern themselves quite frequently with various matters connected to the four species, but do not discuss the requirement to bind them together. This applies to R. Shem Tov ibn Gaon, in his *Keter shem tov*; R. Yehoshua ibn Shuib, in his commentary on the Torah, etc. Conversely, it may be possible to prove that ibn Shuib was not even familiar with possibility of binding. For as he writes: “The matter of taking the *lulav* with the right that has in it three species and the *etrog* with the left. And this has a profound meaning for the knowers of hidden wisdom.”[[84]](#footnote-84) Also, the supercommentary to Nahmanides (attributed to R. Meir Abusahula) unequivocally states: “*Peri etz hadar*, which is the *etrog*, became attached to the other species but not bound and not with the right, **but rather separated and with the left**.”[[85]](#footnote-85)

However, a different student of R. Shlomo ibn Aderet, R. Hayyim ben Shmuel of Toledo,[[86]](#footnote-86) mentions an interesting speculation about Nahmanides:

There are those who connect the *lulav* to the *etrog* when taking them. And I heard the opinion of Nahmanides, may his memory be a blessing, that when reciting the blessing one must join them, but during the shaking they should not be joined. And his reasoning, may his memory be a blessing, was that shaking is a sign of influx like “nodded His head” (Berakhot 7a). And the *etrog* is the **receiver** of the influx.

This passage teaches us:

1. There is a custom, seemingly among only a minority, to conjoin the *lulav* and the *etrog*.
2. There is speculation that Nahmanides attached them during the blessing, but not while shaking.
3. There is a basic differentiation between the *lulav* that influxes and the *etrog* that receives, like the feminine figure.

However, already in the early generations, different Kabbalists advocated for attaching the *etrog* and *lulav* while making the blessing so that they become one. The Kabbalists viewed this as the perfection and unification desired between the masculine and feminine world. Below we shall dedicate a brief discussion to the history of this practice.[[87]](#footnote-87)

The *Bahir* emphasized[[88]](#footnote-88) presenting the lowest feminine *sefira* as different and separate[[89]](#footnote-89) from the nine *sefirot*, and nevertheless united with them as part of the general sefirotic world that includes aspects of the masculine and feminine as one. The relationship between the *lulav* and the *etrog* served as a good example for his view. The *etrog* symbolizes the feminine, and is therefore different than the other three. However, its sexuality is important because – “it is with everyone and everyone is with it.” This principle corresponds to the halakha that dictates that although the *lulav* and *etrog* are taken with different hands, the *etrog* is nevertheless considered bound with the rest, for the *mitzvah* demands taking all four. And indeed, this is what the *Bahir* writes: “The *etrog* is separate from the bind of the *lulav* and the *mitzvah* of *lulav* only exists with it, and it is also bound with all.”[[90]](#footnote-90)

The *Zohar* clearly expresses the connection between the symbol in the supernal world and the action of the lower: “Some of them are connected with the Holy Name, such as *lulav*, *etrog*, myrtle, and willow, all are linked with his Holy Name above. So we must grasp them and perform an action with them, in order to arouse the one linked with them.”[[91]](#footnote-91) Closely following and influenced by this was Recanati,[[92]](#footnote-92) who preferred to rely on a dream,[[93]](#footnote-93) which many viewed as a reliable source and therefore served as adequate proof. He was joined by *Sefer ha-peliah*, which was written in Byzantium at the end of the fourteenth century.

R. David ben Yehuda He-Hasid, an early fourteenth century Kabbalist, also spoke of the requirement to attach them, and he also employed the term *yihud* (unification) and others like it. These are his words:

If you say, “why is the *etrog* not bound with the other species in one bind,” one could say…for she needs the others because she does not have her own light, and regarding this matter she is not included in the bind of the *sefirot*, but with regard to the *yihud* she is included…therefore one who takes the *etrog* when he shakes it he must affix the *etrog* to the *lulav* to demonstrate the bind of faith and the supernal *zivug* (union).[[94]](#footnote-94)

This Kabbalist’s importance lies also in the fact that he traveled to North Africa and apparently influenced a number of sixteenth and seventeenth century Kabbalists in Morocco who shared a uniform style. For example, R. Yosef Al-Ashkar,[[95]](#footnote-95) Moshe Elbaz,[[96]](#footnote-96) Abraham Adrutiel,[[97]](#footnote-97) and Isaac ha-Kohen,[[98]](#footnote-98) followed closely by Ya’akov Ifergan.[[99]](#footnote-99)

This idea was not confined to North Africa. R. David ben Zimra, one of the great Egyptian rabbis who had literary links to North Africa, writes in the name of Recanati: “One must join the *etrog* and *lulav* and lead and bring with both hands to **unify** the four-letter name. **And this is the** **custom of the Musta’arav**.[[100]](#footnote-100)

In any case, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the requirement to attach is stated explicitly in works of halakha such as: Jacob Weil’s *Responsa*, no. 191; *Beit Yosef*; *Shulhan arukh*, no. 651 s”k 11 (and R. Moshe Isserles did not comment on it!); *Zekan Aharon* *responsa* and more. The overwhelming majority of these relied on Recanati, and seemingly followed *Beit Yosef*:

R. Menahem from Recanat (the Recanati) wrote in the *Emor* section: The *etrog* should be fixed with the rest of the species so as not to separate from the *binyan*. This secret was revealed to me in a dream on the first night of *yom tov* of Sukkot, while I was lodging with an Ashkenazi *Hasid* by the name of R. Isaac, and I saw in a dream that he was writing the name yu”d he”h and was distancing the last he”h from the first three letters. I said to him: “What have you done?” and he replied: “this is the custom in our place.” I protested and wrote it whole, and I was astonished at the sight and I could not understand. The following day, while taking the *lulav*, I saw that he was shaking the *lulav* only with the species, and without the *etrog*, and suddenly I understood the meaning of my dream and he changed his mind.[[101]](#footnote-101)

It is safe to assume that R. Yosef Karo’s decision was what influenced the wide reception of this ruling.

It appears that Lurianic Kabbalah contributed to it as well. R. Hayyim Vital speaks of “the **prohibition** of separating the *etrog* from the *lulav* when taking it,” relying on the dream brought by Recanati.[[102]](#footnote-102) Articulated elsewhere[[103]](#footnote-103): “One must not separate the *etrog* at all from the *lulav*, but rather have both hands close together joining the *lulav* and *etrog* together.”[[104]](#footnote-104) Beginning at the end of the sixteenth century, all Kabbalists require binding. These sources, with the addition of R. Yosef Karo, suffice to explain the broad acceptance of this custom by the public.[[105]](#footnote-105)

I will conclude with the words of a Kabbalist from the generation of the expulsion who lived in Constantinople: “The *etrog* must be connected to the *lulav* while shaking, and he who decries this will be judged, for all our actions must be in the supernal likeness for this is necessitated by the awesome wisdom.”[[106]](#footnote-106) Alongside this extreme ruling we shall note a moderate position of a halakhic figure: “It must be connected etc., — for a choice *mitzvah*, but according to the law there is no need to join them together.”[[107]](#footnote-107)

We briefly discussed various aspects of the Talmudic literature, the *aggada*, and the halakha. Some of them were employed by the Kabbalists for the expansion of ideals, and some brought with them various practical and moral conclusions. The requirement to grasp together the four species in the hands of the one making the blessing became well known, as it was viewed as a symbol and reflection of the value of unity. It is likely that you would be hard pressed to find a single person who opposes this kabbalistic ruling, which has become common practice.

1. See e.g. Leviticus Rabba 30; In Y. Heinemann*, Ta’ame ha-mitzvot be-sifrut Yisrael*, 1959, vol. I, p. 31, noted Midrashim concerned with compatibility and others that also add an ethical tone. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch noted their symbolic meaning. According to his understanding, the *etrog* symbolizes the enjoyment derived from nature without human effort, and the enjoyment derived from the fruit created by nature which man must perfect. See in his commentary, *Horev*, to Leviticus 23:40. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. S. Abramski, *Bar Kokhva nesi Yisrael*, Tel Aviv 1961, p. 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishmaeel*, *Masekhta ba-hodesh*, 6. In slight variance from the Tanaitic Midrash to Deuteronomy 5:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. On identifying the *etrog* see J. Tavori, *Jewish Festivals* *in the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud* (Hebrew), Jerusalem 1995, pp.175-178; Y. Felix, *‘Atzei* *peri le-minheihem*, *Tzimhei ha-Tanakh ve-Hazal*, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 195-196; Samuel Tolkowsky, *Peri etz hadar*, Jerusalem 1966, esp. pp.49-68. On the *etrog* in Yemen see Ovadia Melamed, *Mesoret ha-tefila ve-shoresh ha-minhag*, 2006, p. 332. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Tiferet Israel*, on Mishna Sukka 3:37. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Jacob Ettlinger, *Bikkurei Ya’akov*, printed in a collection of commentaries to tractate Sukka, clause 651, 1996, 28c. See also D. Sperber, *Minhagei Israel*, vol. VI, p. 163 no. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Yaakov Nagen, “The Lulav as Korban in Rabbinical Halakha,” (Hebrew) *Da’at* 49 (2002), pp.5-33. See also Rabbi Dr. David Ochs, *Maskil le-David*, vol. I, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 221-232. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Leviticus 1:4, ibid., 22:25. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Sukka 35a. There is no doubt that in this homily the homilist was not only speaking of the connection to Temple worship but also of the unitedness of the nation, as is emphasized in additional homilies concerning the four species. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Sukka 45a. And see the kabbalistic developments below (no. 36) from *Sefer ha-kane*. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Rosh haShana 16a. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. R. Bahya’s commentary on Leviticus 23:40 (Chavel edition, 1966, vol. II, p. 551). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Leviticus Rabbah 30:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ibid., (above no. 12) p. 553. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *Guide of the Perplexed* (Schwartz edition), Israel 2008, p. 374. See also Isaac Arama, *The Binding of Isaac*, Gate 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See Genesis Rabbah 15:8, 20:20. And see Mordehky Kislev, “*Etz ha-da’at etrog haya*,” *Sinai*, 125 (2009), pp. 9-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. In his commentary on Leviticus 23:40 (above no.12), p. 556. Found also in one of the kabbalistic classics, *Ma’arekhet ha-elohut*, Jerusalem 1963, 74a: “*Peri etz hadar* was said of the *etrog*, and Onkelos translated ‘and the tree was desired to make one wise’—‘*demargag lemehvei*’ [Aramaic] in the language of *arag nehasin*, it was therefore the *etrog* with which Adam sinned.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Rabbeinu Bahya alludes to his commentary on Leviticus 22:27. And cf. his commentary on Genesis 3:6, “*Va-yokhal*.” [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. R. Ya’akov Bar Sheshet, *Meshiv devarim nekhohim*, Jerusalem 1969, p. 175. And see the entire chapter there, pp. 175-177. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. R. Bahya’s commentary on Leviticus 23:40, ibid., p. 555. The word *kavod* has the numerical equivalency of *lev* (heart). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *Seder ha-yom*, Jerusalem 1985, 49d. And read also the important continuation. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See e.g. R. Moshe de Leon, *The Book of the Pomegranate*, Eliot Wolfson ed., Atlanta 1988, p. 184 no.13. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See *The Book of the Pomegranate*, ibid., p. 184, no.8. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See e.g. *Ma’arekhet ha-elohut*, Ch. 13, Jerusalem 1963, 169b; And see Efraim Gottlieb, *Ha-kabbalah be-kitvei Rabbenu Bahya Bar Asher*, 1970, p. 17, 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. *Tikkunei zohar*, *Tikkun* 21, Jerusalem 1948, 56b. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. R. Bahya, *Commentary* on Genesis 3:6, Chavel ed., p. 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Tikkunei Zohar*, *tikkun* 21, Jerusalem 1948, 29a. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. David ben Zimra, *Metzudat David*, commandment 118, 23a. On Esther as *yerakroket* see Megillah 13a. It should be noted that throughout history *yarok* was identified with what we today call yellow. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Yehuda Hayyat, “Minhat Yehuda*,*”in *Ma’arekhet ha-elohut* (above, no. 24), 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Later, on p.94: “River alludes to the supernal crown which is called ‘deep river.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. R. David son of Yehuda the Hasid, *Mar’ot ha-zoveot*, Daniel Matt, Chico, CA, 1982 edition, p.93. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. In the original Hebrew the author uses the feminine here. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. *Mar’ot ha-zoveot*, ibid., pp. 95-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. *Sefer ha-rimon* (above no. 22), p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. This linguistic homily, *korban*=*mekarev*, was put forward in the *Bahir*, 1948, no. 109, and is repeated frequently by Kabbalists. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *Sefer ha-kane*, *Sod ha-hakafot*, Krakow 1894, 82b. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. David ben Zimra, *Metzudat David*, *Mitzvah* 118, Zolkiew 1862, 23a. And there: “The *etrog* resembles the heart and alludes to the attribute called *LeV* (heart) which is the last and is the *peri etz hadar*, for the joining of the fruit with the tree is *hadar* and it dwells (*dar*) in the tree all year, alluding in the joining—that one should not take the fruit on its own.” And more explicitly later on (23d): “For it is with them and they are with it, only it is not bound with them always and it is therefore alone, for it is bound during certain times according to the supernal will. And this is ‘Do not awaken, nor stir up love, until it pleases’— the supernal pleasure.” This excerpt paraphrases the passage in *Sefer ha-kane*, above no.36. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid., 23b. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. *Mar’ot ha-zoveot*, ibid., pp. 97-98. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See Berakhot, 43b. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. R. Abraham Sava, *Tzror ha-mor*, Genesis, 1961, 8b. Cf. with *Sefer ha-hinukh* above (between no.14-15). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. R. Alexander Ziskind of Grodno (d. 1794), *Yesod ve-shoresh ha-avoda*, *Sha’ar ha-iton*, Ch. 14, Bnei Brak [1987], II, p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Berakhot 57a. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. S. Ashkenzi, *Dor dor u-minhagav*, 1987, p. 73. And there: The Hasidic leader, R. Shlomo Leib from Łęczna loved the commandment of *etrog* so much that every day of Sukkot when reciting *Hallel* he would kiss it (*Emunat tzadikim*, section 185). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ecclesiastes 2:14. R. Meir of Rothenburg, *Sefer minhagim*, Israel Elfenbein ed., 1938, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Pesahim, *Ner mitzvah*, Haifa 1992, no. 39, 115b. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See e.g. R. Ovadia Yosef, *Hazon ‘Ovadya*, *Sukkot*, Jerusalem 2005, p. 449. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Rosh haShana, 15a. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Yom Tov Levinsky (ed.), *Sefer ha-mo’adim*, *Sukkot*, 1951, p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. There is an interesting tradition of sages who intentionally had in their possession a great many *etrog*s (thirteen, and 136). Eliezer Kestenbaum, *Pardes Eliezer*, Brooklyn 2007, *Sukkot*, I, p. 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. R. Moshe Isserles, *Orah hayim*, no. 638, seif katan (hereafter s”k) b. Cf. Sukka 37b. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. R. Isaac Tyrnau, *Sefer ha-minhagim*, Jerusalem 1946, p. 55. However in the *Shulhan arukh*, no. 653, s”k a, wrote following the controversy that “one should avoid smelling it.” These words of the *Shulhan arukh* are often quoted in later halakhic works. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. R. Berhiya ha-Levi, *Azharot* *le Shabbat kodem Sukkot*, Ya’akov Spiegel ed., *Pithei tefillah u-mo’adim*, 2010, p. 332. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Yom Tov Levinsky, (above no. 49), p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Shabbat, 109b. And see also Leviticus Rabbah 37:2, from which the tale of the king is derived. See Also Y. Ratzhabi, *Be-ma’agelot Teiman*, Tel Aviv, 1988, p. 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. See this story expounded in Leviticus Rabbah 37:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. A. Y. Sperling, *Ta’amei ha-minhagim u-mekorei ha-dinim*, Jerusalem 1957, p. 576. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. *Yaffe la-lev* (below no. 60). And: “We have seen elderly rabbis who preserve the four species every year and say that it is beneficial for protection.” (HID”A, *Kikar La-Aden*, Livorno 1801, 162a). And: “On the festival of Sukkot they (Moroccan Jews) put aside their *etrog*s until the following Sukkot as a *segulah* for protection.” (R. Ya’akov Moshe Toledano, *Ner ha-ma’arav*, Jerusalem 1989, p. 304). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ben Ish Hai, *Shana rishona*, *Re’e*, 11. Rabbi Palachi (below no. 63) added: “I say that in a place where *etrogs* are found they should be offered as a sweet for Rosh haShana guests.” (no. 12, s”k 23. And see *Hazon ‘Ovadia* (above no. 47), pp. 449-450. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. For example, *Yaffe la-lev*, II, no. 664, 15; *Kaf ha-hayim*, no. 662, s”k 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ketubot, 61a. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. An important detail to note, for the *Shulhan arukh*, no, 665 s”k a, explicitly rules that: “On the seventh day *etrog* is forbidden for it was allocated for the seven.” It appears that a *segula* from a *mitzvah* beyond its performance carries more weight from the people’s perspective than the halakha itself (which they may not have known). It is thus understood also by Shalom Shakhna Tsherniak, *Hayyim u-brakha*, 1903, section 70, 228, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. R. Haim Palachi, *Mo’ed le-kol hai* (1787-1868), no. 24, 25, Jerusalem 1985, pp. 324-325; *Hazon ‘Ovadia* (above no. 47), pp. 449-450. And see on this Aliza Lavie, *Tefilat nashim*, 2005, pp. 251-252. However R. Yair Bacharach, in his commentary on the Tur, *Mekor hayim*, no. 24 s”k 25, disagrees and writes: “How fortunate we are that that these kinds of customs were uprooted.” [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. *Zohar hadash*, *Ki Tisa*, Jerusalem 1948, bottom of p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. S. Ashkenzi, *Avnei hen*, 1990, p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. R. Zvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov, *Bnei Yisaskhar*, *Mamar Hodesh Shvat*, 2:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *Leshon hakhamim*, 1990, pp.144-145. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. S. Ashkenazi, *Dor dor u-minhagav*, 1987, p. 79. See also Akiva Ben-Ezra, *Minhagei hagim*, Jerusalem 1963, pp.75-77. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. S. Ashkenazi, *Dor dor u-minhagav*, 1987, p.75. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. S. Ashkenazi, *Avnei hen*, 1990, p. 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Y. Ratzhabi (above no. 55), p. 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. *Sefer minhagim* (above no. 52), p. 65. And see *Sefer hasidim*, Berlin 1928, p. 398, no. 1634. The source is Talmud, Sukka 41b. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. *Terumat ha-deshen*, II, *Pesakim u-khtavim*, no. 52, Jerusalem 1992, 7a. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. *Sha’ar ha-mitzvot*, *Reish Parashat ‘Ekev*, Jerusalem 1905, 37b. And see M. Benayahu, *Sefer toldot ha-Ari*, 1967, pp. 317, 348. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. See Benayahu, ibid,, p. 317 no. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. And see All of S.Y. Agnon’s writings, *Ha-esh ve ha-etzim*, pp. 115-117, 275 etc. Particularly known is the question of exaggerated prices of fish for the Sabbath. See e.g. *Magen Avraham*, *Orah hayyim*, no. 142, s”k 1. And see M. Hallamish, *Ha-kabbalah ba-tefliah ba-halakha u-ba-minhag*, Jerusalem 2010 (third edition), pp. 493-495. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. *Sefer ha-mo’adim*, (above no. 49), p. 94. Incidentally, the verse explicated was already discussed in connection with the *etrog* in the Midrash. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. *Mo’ed le-kol hai* (above no. 63), no. 293p, s”k 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Sukka 34b. See there. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. The phrase “*aguda ahat* (one bundle)” with regard to the four species appears in the Talmud and in the Midrash. See Sukka 34b; Menahot 27a; Leviticus Rabbah 30. And see the Vilna Gaon’s commentary on the *Shulhan arukh* no. 651, s”k 32, that ties the halakha under discussion to talmudic sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. See Sukka 37b. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. *Hilkhot lulav*, 7:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. *Sefer ha-mikhtam*, Moshe Bloy ed., New-York 1959, p.164. His words were also quoted in R. Aharon ha-Kohen of Lunel, *Orhot Hayyim*, *Hilkhot lulav*, 19. And see a discussion surrounding this in the *Turei zahav* to the *Shulhan arukh*, no. 651, s”k 14. And see also Menahem ha-Meiri, *Beit ha-behira*, Sukka, Jerusalem 1959, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. *Derashot al ha-torah*, Krakow 1573, 94d. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Warsaw 1875, 37b. And emphasized in the *Ma’arekhet* (192a): “The *etrog* must come together with it, alluding to the *‘Atara* but not in one bind [!], because it is not in their unity.” [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. *Tzror ha-hayyim*, Jerusalem 1965, p. 105. And see the opposition of the author of *Kaf ha-hayyim*, no. 651, s”k 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. I elaborated on this in my book (above no. 76), Chapter 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. A view repeated a number of times in a few sections, suggesting that the book ascribes importance to it. For example, in the Margalioth ed., Jerusalem 1951, §44, §133, §175. We briefly discussed the significance of this idea in Kabbalah above. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. “In the secret of women as a nation to themselves,” in the words of R. Isaac ha-Kohen, who discusses this same matter. R. Isaac was active in Morocco in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. And regarding this subject see M. Idel, *R. Menahem Recanati the Kabbalist* (Hebrew), Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, 1998, pp.215-231. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. See the *Book Bahir*, §171-175. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. *Zohar* I, 220b, Pritzker ed. vol. VIII, p. 176. And even more in the sentence that follows it that is phrased like a principle: “Concerning this we have learned: By word and deed, one must demonstrate to matter, so as to arouse another matter.” Cf. also *Zohar* II, 125b (Pritzker, vol. V, p. 173): “For the matter depends on action, an action below arousing above,” and more like this. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Section *Emor*, Lemberg 1880, 67d. On the dream see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Later on, in A. Klausner, *Sefer minhagim* (Jerusalem 1978, p. 49), the dream story is brought in an explanatory note (seemingly by Klausner), stating that one should join the *etrog* to the *lulav*. This source is of interest, because up to the present I have no other Ashkenazi source that requires binding. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. *Or zarua*, MS JTS 2203 (F 11301), p. 90b; MS BL 771 (F 5454), p. 91b. And see his words in his book, *Mar’ot ha-tzove’ot* (above no. 31), pp.95-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. *Zafenat pa’ane’ah*, MS Jerusalem 154°4, p. 45b. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. *Heikhal ha-kodesh*, Amsterdam 1653, 75a. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. *Avnei zikaron*, MS JTS 1746 (F 10844), p. 110b. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. *Ginat bitan*, ed. by Moshe Hallamish, Lod 1998, pp. 51, 67, 82, 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. *Minha hadasha*, ed. by Moshe Hallamish, Lod 2002, p. 523 (MS Liverpool m12044 [F 14584], 497b). [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. R. David ben Zimra, *Responsa*, IV, *Alef*, 328 (257). In another place he notes: “And I am careful that my fingers do not separate the *lulav* and the *etrog*” (*Metzudat David*, *mitzvah* 118, 23c). [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. The words of the *Beit Yosef*, *Orah hayim*, no.651. And see R. Nahman Kahana, *Orhot hayim*, on the Tur, Jerusalem 1962, 149a, s”k 27. R. Hayyim of Volozhyn (*Keter rosh*, no. 108) relied also on the acronym *EELeH* (Let me climb) [=*Etrog*, *Arava*, *Lulav*, *Hadas*] *be-tamar* (the palm). [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. *Sha’ar ha-kavanot*, Jerusalem 1902, 105c. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. *Peri etz Hayim*, Koretz 1785, *Sha’ar ha-Lulav*, Chapter III, 129b. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. *Sha’ar ha-kavanot*, 23c. And see Immanuel Hai Ricchi, *Mishnat hasidim*, *Masekhet yemei mitzvah ve-suka*, Ch. 5, Mishna 2, 125b. See also *Ptora de-aba*, II, s”k 58, Jerusalem 1905, 45c; *Shulhan arukh ha-Ari*, Jerusalem 1961, p.166: “The *etrog* should not be separated.” And there is no room to elaborate further. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Indeed, R. Isaac Yosef, *Yalkut Yosef*, *Mo’adim*, Jerusalem 1988, p. 162, relies on *Beit Yosef* and the *Sha’ar ha-kavanot*. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. R. Meir ibn Gabbai, *Tola’at Ya’akov*, *Sod arba’a minim*, Warsaw 1876, 41d. This entire chapter is a kind of adaptation and summary of the previous Kabbalists. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. *Eliya raba*, no. 651 s”k 29, in the name of the Bah (Joel Sirkis). [↑](#footnote-ref-107)