

## Daf Ditty Succah 32: “Psychotic” hadassim



*Nerium oleander* most commonly known as oleander or nerium, is a shrub or small tree cultivated worldwide in temperate and subtropical areas as an ornamental and landscaping plant. It is the only species currently classified in the genus *Nerium*, belonging to subfamily Apocynoideae of the dogbane family Apocynaceae. It is so widely cultivated that no precise region of origin has been identified, though it is usually associated with the Mediterranean Basin.

The *hirduf* – *nerium oleander* – is an evergreen shrub that grows to a height of four meters. Its yellowish-greenish leaves are thick and leathery with pink flowers.

Although it certainly meets the requirement to have leaves that cover the branches, it is rejected because of its toxicity.

הלכה כרבי טרפון: מתני' הדם הגזול  
 יהיבש פסל של אשרה ושל עיר העדה  
 פסל נקטם ראשי נפרצו עליו 'או שהיו  
 ענביו מרובות מעליו פסל ואם מיעטן כשר  
 ואין ממעטין בי"ם: גמ' תנו רבנן ענף עץ  
 עבות שענפיו הפין את עצו ואי זה הוא  
 דני אומר זה הדם ואימא זיתא בעינן עבות

Jastrow, 1 הדס

הדס m. (b. h.) *myrtle branch* (with three leaves on top), used for the festive wreath on the Feast of Booths (Lev. XXIII, 40). Succ. III, 2. Ib. 32<sup>b</sup> ה' שוטה wild myrtle (with one or two leaves on top); a. fr.—Pl. הדסים. Ib. III, 4 ה' three myrtle branches are required for the festive wreath. Meg. 13<sup>a</sup> the righteous ה' שנקראו ה' who are named myrtles (Zech. I, 8); a. c.

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Jastrow, 1 ענב

ענב c. (b. h.; preced.) 1) *grapes with the tendrils*, also *berry*. Y. Ned. XI, 42<sup>d</sup> ע' ועוד ... קונם תאנה I swear that I will not taste figs and furthermore (after thirty days) grapes.—Pl. סחטה ע' וכ' 19 Gen. R. s. 19 עי, ענבי const. ענבין, ענבים she (Eve) pressed grapes and gave him the juice to drink. Pes. 49<sup>a</sup> משל לע' הגפן בעי הגפן (a marriage between a scholar and a scholar's daughter is) like bunches of grapes combined with bunches of grapes; לע' הגפן בעי הסנה (a scholar married to an ignorant man's daughter is) like a bunch of grapes with berries of thorns. Shh. 99<sup>a</sup> יין המשומר בענביו wine preserved in its grapes from the six days of creation (future reward of scholars); Ber. 34<sup>b</sup>.—Succ. III, 2 ענביו מרובות מעליו if the berries on the myrtle exceed its leaves; a. fr. —2) (cmp. σταφύλωμα) *a growth on the eye*. Bekh. VI, 2 ועינב (Ar. וענב; Bab. ed. 38<sup>a</sup> עצב, corr. acc.); ib.<sup>b</sup> עצב (corr. acc.); Sifra Emor, ch. II, Par. 3 עיניו (Rab. ענב); v. א.י.ג.



משנה the זאגט:

הדס הגזול והיבש פסול של אשרה ושל עיר הנדחת פסול

A stolen or dry הדס is פסול. One from an אשרה or an עיר הנדחת is פסול.

The reasons for these disqualifications are the same as for the Lulav.

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The Gemara cites a ברייתא which identifies the הדס.

The Posuk says;

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר כפות תמרים וענף עץ עבות וערבי נחל

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These phrases refer to the ארבע מינים - The Four Species, known as;

- אתרוג לולב הדסים ערבות

The phrase ענף עץ עבות - a shoot of a braided tree, refers to the הדסים, which are

ענפיו חופין את עצו - the leaves cover the branches by overlapping each other, giving the appearance of a braid.

מִתְנִי' הַדָּס הַגְּזוּל וְהַיָּבֵשׁ — פְּסוּל. שֶׁל אֲשֶׁרָה וְשֶׁל עֵיר הַנִּדְחָת  
 — פְּסוּל. נִקְטַם רֵאשׁוֹ, נִפְרָצוּ עָלָיו, אוֹ שֶׁהָיוּ עֲנָבָיו מְרֻבּוֹת מֵעָלָיו  
 — פְּסוּל. וְאִם מִיעָטָן — כָּשֵׁר, וְאִין מִמְעָטָין בְּיוֹם טוֹב.

**MISHNA: A myrtle branch that was stolen or that is completely dry is unfit. A myrtle branch of a tree worshipped as idolatry [asheira] or a myrtle branch from a city whose residents were incited to idolatry is unfit. If the top of the myrtle branch was severed, if the leaves were severed completely, or if its berries were more numerous than its leaves, it is unfit. If one diminished their number by plucking berries so that they no longer outnumbered the leaves, the myrtle branch is fit. But one may not diminish the number on the Festival itself.**

גְּמַ' תְּנוּ רַבָּנָן: "עֲנַף עֵץ עֲבוֹת" — שֶׁעֲנָפָיו חוֹפִין אֶת עֵצוֹ. וְאִי זֶה  
 הוּא? הָיִי אוֹמֵר זֶה הַדָּס. וְאִימָא זִיתָא! בְּעֵינָן "עֲבוֹת", וְלִיכָא.

**GEMARA: The Sages taught:** It is written:

מ וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בְּיוֹם הָרֵאשׁוֹן, פְּרֵי עֵץ  
 הַדֶּרַךְ כַּפַּת תְּמָרִים, וְעֲנַף עֵץ-עֲבֹת, וְעֶרְבֵי-  
 נָחַל; וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם, לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם--  
 שִׁבְעַת יָמִים. **40** And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly  
 trees, branches of palm-trees, and boughs of thick trees,  
 and willows of the brook, and ye shall rejoice before the  
 LORD your God seven days.

Lev 23:40

**“Boughs of a dense-leaved tree”** this is referring to a tree whose leaves obscure its tree. And which tree is that? You must say it is the myrtle tree. The Gemara suggests: And say it is the olive tree, whose leaves obscure the tree. The Gemara answers: We require a “dense-leaved” tree, whose leaves are in a chain-like configuration, and that is not the case with an olive tree.



It cannot be referring to  
 זיתא - an olive tree, because,  
 בעין עבות וליכא -  
 It needs to be plaited, which is like braided, and the leaves of an  
 olive trees are not like that.  
 It cannot be  
 דולבא - a chestnut tree, because,  
 בעין ענפיו חופין את עצו וליכא -  
 We need to have the leaves covering the branches, and the  
 branches of the chestnut tree are not like that.  
 It cannot be  
 הירדוף - the Hirduf branch, because,  
 אמר אבי דרכיה דרכי נועם וליכא  
 The Hirduf is prickly and not pleasant to hold.  
 רבא אמר מהכא האמת והשלום אהבו  
 The פסוק says - Love truth and peace - and the Hirduf is  
 poisonous to animals, and a contradiction to truth and peace.

וְאִמָּא דוֹלְבָא! בְּעִינָא עֲנָפִיו חוֹפִין אֶת עֲצוֹ, וְלִיכָא.

The Gemara suggests: **And say it is the Oriental plane tree**, whose leaves are in a braid-like configuration. The Gemara answers: **We require a tree whose leaves obscure its tree, and that is not the case with an Oriental plane tree.**

ואימא הירדוף! אמר אביי: "דרכיה דרכי נועם", וליכא. רבא אמר,  
מהכא: "האמת והשלום אהבו".

The Gemara suggests: **And say** the verse is referring to **oleander**, which has both characteristics. **Abaye said:** It is written with regard to the Torah:

יז דרכיה דרכי-נועם; וכל-נתיבותיה  
שלום. 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths  
are peace.

יז דרכיה דרכי-נועם; וכל-נתיבותיה  
שלום. 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths  
are peace.

**"Its ways are ways of pleasantness"** (Proverbs 3:17), **and** that **is not** the case with the oleander tree, because it is a poisonous plant and its sharp, thorn-like leaves pierce the hand of one holding it. **Rava said:** The unfitness of the oleander is derived **from here:**

יט כה-אמר יהוה צבאות, צום הרביעי  
וצום התמישי וצום השביעי וצום  
העשירי יהיה לבית-יהודה לששון  
ולשמחה, ולמזדים, טובים; והאמת  
והשלום, אהבו. {פ} 19 'Thus saith the LORD of hosts: The fast of the  
fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of  
the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the  
house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful  
seasons; therefore love ye truth and peace.

Zech 8:19

**"Love truth and peace"** and poisonous plants that pierce are antithetical to peace.

תנו רבנן: קלוע כמין קליעה ודומה לשלשלת, זהו הדס. רבי אליעזר  
בן יעקב אומר: "ענף עץ עבות" — עץ שטעם עצו ופריו שוה, הוי  
אומר זה הדס.

The Sages taught: **Plaited like a braid and chain-like; that is** characteristic of the **myrtle branch** used in the fulfillment of the mitzva. **Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya'akov says** another characteristic. It is written: **"Boughs of a dense-leaved tree,"** indicating **a tree that the taste of its branches and the taste of its fruit are alike. You must say this is the myrtle branch.**



תנא עץ עבות כשר ושאינו עבות פסול  
 A הדס which is  
 קלוע כמין קליעה ודומה לשלשלת -  
 Plaited like a braid and similar to a chain, by overlapping each  
 other - is Kosher. If it is not so, it is Posul.  
 היכי דמי עבות  
 אמר רב יהודה  
 והוא דקיימי תלתא תלתא טרפי בקינא  
 Clusters of three leaves each come out at the same level along  
 the stem.  
 רב כהנא אמר אפילו תרי וחד  
 Even if only two come out on the same level, while the third  
 comes out a bit lower - but it does overlap the other two leaves  
 - it is also Kosher.  
 אממר called this a שוטה, a deranged myrtle, and it is Posul.

תנא: עץ עבות — כשר, ושאינו עבות — פסול.

**A Sage taught** in the *Tosefta*: **A dense-leaved branch is fit, and one that is not dense-leaved is unfit**, even though it is a myrtle branch.

היכי דמי עבות? אמר רב יהודה: והוא דקיימי תלתא תלתא טרפי בקינא. רב כהנא אמר: אפילו תרי וחד. רב אחא בריה דרבא מהדר אתרי וחד, הואיל ונפיק מפומיה דרב כהנא. אמר ליה מר בר אממר לרב אשי: אבא להווא — הדס שוטה קרי ליה.

The Gemara asks: **What are the circumstances of “dense-leaved tree”?** **Rav Yehuda said:** And it is a configuration where **three leaves** emerge from **each base**. **Rav Kahana said:** Even **two** leaves emerging from one base **and one** leaf that covers the other two emerging from a lower base is called thick. **Rav Aḥa, son of Rava, would purposely seek** a myrtle branch configured with **two** leaves emerging from one base **and one** emerging from a lower base, **since** this statement **emerged from the mouth of Rav Kahana**. **Mar bar Ameimar said to Rav Ashi:** My father called a myrtle branch with that configuration a **wild myrtle branch**.

## Summary

8) **MISHNAH:** The halachos of the **הדס** are presented.

9) **The identity of the ענף עץ עבות**

The Gemara identifies the exact species referred by the Torah as **ענף עץ עבות**.

Two Beraisos describe the necessary characteristics of a valid **הדס**.

10) **עבות**

R' Yehudah and R' Kahana disagree whether **עבות** requires three leaves in each cluster or even a pair of leaves with a third leaf on top is sufficient.

The Gemara relates that different Rabbi's had different preferences regarding this issue.

11) **A הדס whose leaves fell off**

A Beraisaites cites a ruling regarding a **הדס** whose leaves fell off.

The Gemara notes that the Beraisaites seems to be contradictory. ■

**Daf Shevui** writes:<sup>1</sup>

Today's section moves on to the next mishnah, one concerning the hadas.

The first two lines are the same as the previous mishnah concerning a lulav. The remainder of the mishnah is specific to the physical qualities of the hadas. The Talmud will discuss these as we proceed over the next few pages.

As the Talmud did with regard to the various parts of the lulav, it asks how we know that the Torah refers to the myrtle. After all Leviticus 23:40 only states “the branches of a thick tree.” How do we know that the tree is a myrtle?

The word for “thick” can also mean “interwoven.” So an olive branch is ruled out because its leaves are not “wreathed” or “interwoven.”

The plane tree is ruled out because the branches must cover the trunk in order to be a “thick” tree.

The oleander is ruled out because its branches are thorny. This is the same reason that the spiky parts of the palm cannot be used. The Torah's mitzvot are pleasant and peaceful. Using a thorny branch to perform a mitzvah would not be pleasant.

The first section of this baraita is an interpretation of the word “avot” from Leviticus 23:40. “Avot” means plaited and like a chain—these are the leaves of the myrtle (hadas). R. Eliezer b. Yaakov says that the leaf (anaf) and the wood (etz) must taste the same and this, in his opinion, is true of the hadas.

A baraita says that the hadas must be “avot” the word used to describe the hadas in the Torah. R. Judah says that “avot” means that three leaves must all grow from the same spot. Today, the best hadasim have this quality. But R. Kahana says that a hadas where two leaves grow together and then one is separate is either also okay, or perhaps even better. R. Aha, a later amora, seeks out such a hadas because he holds R. Kahana in such esteem.

The section ends though, with Mar b. Amemar telling R. Ashi that a hadas that doesn't have three leaves coming out of one spot is a wayward hadas. It seems that such a hadas would not be valid.

The baraita seems to contradict itself. How can a hadas have most of its leaves fall off and still be plaited? Usually there are three leaves per “nest” (spot on stem). So if 2/3 fall off, the plaited look will certainly be gone!

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.sefaria.org/Sukkah.32b.13?lang=bi&p2=Daf\\_Shevui\\_to\\_Sukkah.32b.11-33a.1&lang2=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Sukkah.32b.13?lang=bi&p2=Daf_Shevui_to_Sukkah.32b.11-33a.1&lang2=bi)

Abaye solves the problem by saying that the baraita refers to an Egyptian hadas which begins with seven leaves per nest! Even if four fall off, the hadas is still plaited by the three leaves in one spot.

Since the above baraita must refer to the Egyptian hadas, Abaye deduces that this type of hadas is valid for use in the “hoshanna,” an Aramaic word for the hadas, usually in reference to the hadas used on Sukkot. But this seems obvious—on what grounds would we have disqualified this hadas? The answer is that under certain circumstances if something has an accompanying name, it doesn’t count as part of the category (see for instance Mishnah Parah 11:7). But in this case, since the Torah doesn’t specifically use the word hadas, rather calling it the “thick tree”—any “thick tree” will do.

**Rav Avrohom Adler** writes:<sup>2</sup>

The Mishna rules that a hadas that is stolen, dry, that its top is clipped off or if most of its leaves fell off, it is invalid. A hadas used for idolatry is also invalid.

The Gemara discusses the Halacha that a hadas is required to have three leaves coming out of each bud, and otherwise the stem is referred to as a hadas shoteh, a deranged hadas.

### **The Torah’s Ways are Pleasant**

The Gemara states that one cannot use a palm shoot to fulfill the mitzvah of lulav, because although its stems can be tied and this would fulfill the requirement of kafus, tied up, it is invalid because it is said regarding the Torah its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its pathways are peace. A palm shoot has thorns that make it difficult to hold, and the Torah would not instruct us to take such a branch on Sukkos. It is fascinating that the Gemara uses a verse to prove that the ways of the Torah are pleasant.

One may have thought that although HaShem is merciful, regarding mitzvah performance one is at times required to undergo suffering to perform the mitzvah. The verse teaches us otherwise. The Torah’s ways are pleasant, and one should not be subject to pain in performing a mitzvah. The obvious lesson from this Gemara is that if the Torah ensures that one should not feel pain in fulfilling a mitzvah, then certainly a Jew should not cause his friend any pain, as one is required to love his fellow man, and causing someone else pain would be the antithesis of loving a fellow Jew.

### **HOW MANY LEAVES MUST REMAIN ON A DRY HADAS**

**Rav Mordechai Kornfeld** writes:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [http://dafnotes.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Sukkah\\_32.pdf](http://dafnotes.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Sukkah_32.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>

The Beraisa states that if most of the leaves of the Hadas branch have dried out, but "it still has three Badim of moist leaves" it is valid. Rav Chisda adds that the moist leaves must be at the top of each branch.

What does the Beraisa mean when it says that the Hadas must have "three Badim of moist leaves" left in order for the Hadas to be valid?

(a) **RASHI** explains that the Beraisa means that each of the three branches ("Badim") of Hadas must have three moist leaves (on top, according to Rav Chisda). However, the words, "It still has three branches of moist leaves" is unclear. What is "it" that still has three branches?

The **RA'AVAD** (cited by the **ROSH**) explains that "it" is the Lulav. The Beraisa is saying that "the Lulav still has three [Hadas] branches of moist leaves," which means that each of those three branches has three moist leaves on it.

The **RITVA** translates the word "Badim" differently. He explains that "Badim" means "Kanim," or "sets of leaves." His explanation of the Beraisa concurs, in practice, with Rashi's explanation: each Hadas must have at least three moist leaves left in order to be valid. When the Beraisa says "*it* still has three Badim of moist leaves," the word "it" refers to each of the three Hadas branches. The Beraisa is saying that if "the three branches of Hadas still contain three *sets* (trios) of moist leaves (one trio of leaves per branch)," then it is valid. That is, if each Hadas branch has a set of three moist leaves left on top, it is valid.

(b) The **ROSH** understands the Gemara differently. He explains, like the Ritva, that the word "Badim" refers to "Kanim" ("sets of leaves"). However, he says that the Beraisa refers to *one* branch of Hadas and not to three. The Beraisa is saying that if "it (one branch of Hadas) still contains three sets of moist leaves" *anywhere* on the branch, then it is valid.

According to the Rosh, however, what does Rav Chisda mean when he says that the three sets of leaves must be "at the top of each"? At the top of *what* must the three sets of leaves be? The Beraisa discusses only *one* branch, with one top (with space for only *one* set of three leaves)! How can all three sets of leaves be at the top of one branch?

The Rosh explains that Rav Chisda does not mean that the moist leaves must be at the top of the branch. Rather, he means that of the three sets of leaves on each branch, only one of the three leaves of each set must be moist, and he explains *which* leaf must be moist. The lowest leaf of the set, which usually is on top of (i.e. covers) the upper two leaves of the trio, must be moist, because it is the one that is most visible.

HALACHAH: The **SHULCHAN ARUCH** (OC 646:8) cites both opinions. The **MISHNAH BERURAH** (646:26) rules that the Halachah follows the first opinion, that each branch needs only three moist leaves left on top in order to be valid.

**Steinzaltz (OBM)** writes:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ou.org/life/torah/masechet\\_sukkah2733/](https://www.ou.org/life/torah/masechet_sukkah2733/)

Many of the *halakhot* of *hadassim* – the myrtle branches, referred to as *anaf etz avot* in Vayikra 23:40 – parallel those of the *lulav*. They cannot be stolen or dried up, etc.

The Gemara derives the identification of the *hadas* as a myrtle based on its interpretation of the aforementioned passage in Vayikra, reading it to mean that the leaves must cover the branches. In so doing, the Gemara rejects a number of other possible identifications, like olive branches, *dulva* and *hirduf*.

The *Dulva* – *platanus orientalis* – is a tall, non-fruit-bearing tree (it grows to 50 meters high) of the Platanaceae family that is usually grown as an ornamental tree. It is rejected in this case because its leaves do not totally cover its branches.

The *hirduf* – *nerium oleander* – is an evergreen shrub that grows to a height of four meters. Its yellowish-greenish leaves are thick and leathery with pink flowers. Although it certainly meets the requirement to have leaves that cover the branches, it is rejected because of its toxicity. Both Abayye and Rava quote *psukim* (=verses) – Abayye from Mishlei (3:17) that the ways of the Torah are pleasant; Rava from Zechariah (8:19) that the Torah loves truth and peace – that are understood to indicate that a poisonous plant could not be the one chosen to perform a *mitzvah*.

Further details about the requirements for *hadassim* are taught by Rabbi Yehuda, who insists that a kosher *hadas* must have at least three leaves on each row. Rav Kahane permits a *hadas* where the leaves are set up in rows with two leaves on one level and a third leaf on the next level. This position is rejected by Mar bar Ameimar, who quotes his father as calling this a *hadas shoteh* – a “foolish,” or “mistaken,” *hadas*.

While the Rama permits the use of a *hadas* where there are two leaves on each level (*Shulchan Arukh Orach Chaim* 446:3), the majority of the *poskim* reject that position and rule that three leaves need to be growing on each level.

**Shira Eliaser** writes:<sup>5</sup>

The mishnah with which we have been concerned for the past three days concerns various defects which render a *lulav* unfit for ritual use, including being stolen, dried out, topless, fanned out and too darned short. In the mishnah, a question is raised: Is a *lulav* taken from the palm of the Iron Mountain, a species of tree known for particularly diminutive leaves, kosher? The mishnah answers in the affirmative. Today’s daf tells us where to find these unusual palm fronds:

***Rabbi Marion said that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said (and some say that Rabba bar Mari taught in the name of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai): There are two date palms in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, and smoke arises from between them. And this is the place about which we learned in the mishnah: “A lulav from the palms of the Iron Mountain is fit.” And that site is the entrance of hell (Gehinnom).***

So, although a stolen *lulav* is invalid and it is unthinkable to shake with a *lulav* taken from a tree worshipped in idolatry, a *lulav* plucked from the very gates of hell is, apparently, kosher.

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<sup>5</sup> Myjewishlearning.com

Where or what was Gehinnom (sometimes translated as “hell”)? The single word is a contraction of the phrase *Gei Ben Hinnom*, the Valley of Ben Hinnom (Joshua 15:8), which lies on the border of the original territory of Judah (also mentioned in Nehemiah 11:30). There is good reason it was despised — or feared. The Jebusites from whom King David took Jerusalem were said to practice child sacrifice there; a ghastly practice revived by King Ahaz of Judah, and his great-grandson, the wicked King Menashe (2 Chronicles 28 and 33). The Chronicler is aghast at the practice; the prophet Jeremiah tells us that God is also horrified. To the Jewish mind, there could be no hell worse than the place where children are brutally slaughtered. Centuries later, Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai’s teaching, found on today’s page, carries an echo of the horror in a wisp of smoke that rises between the two palms that guard its entrance.

Although child sacrifice was firmly in the rear view mirror even centuries before the rabbis, Gehinnom lived on in rabbinic imagination as a scary place — a place where people go after death to receive punishment for crimes committed in life. In Rosh Hashanah 16b-17b, Beit Shammai, in typical austere fashion, explains that certain classes of irredeemably wicked Jews and non-Jews can expect to burn in Gehinnom forever, whereas ordinary middling people can expect to expiate their sins for twelve months and then be redeemed for eternal life. Today, Jews generally say Kaddish for a loved one eleven months — implying that they were not *so* wicked they needed a full twelve month course of punishment.

The Talmud does not shy away from describing the torments of Gehinnom. The Jerusalem Talmud (Sanhedrin 53a) explains how the wicked will scream in blasts of light for six months of searing heat and another six of freezing snow. (“Ah,” say my colleagues, “A year in Chicago. I remember it well.”) In Midrash Rabbah and Midrash Tanchuma we find the more classical descriptions of flames, sulfur and pitch as in Sodom, darkness and chaos as in Tehom, the pit of Korah, the icy blasts of Tzalmon and the screams of the doomed as they writhe in agony.

So how can Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai say that a lulav from the trees at the entrance to Gehinnom is kosher? Who would not be terrified of such a lulav?

Who would say Hallel and shake *hoshanot* on Sukkot while waving palm fronds of sulphurous retribution for all but the most righteous among us?

My colleague Rabbi Daniel Vaisrub holds out for the rationalist approach: The issue is not whence the lulav came, but how it came to your hand. You neither stole the leaves nor allowed other thieves to profit from them, so why does it matter whence they came? But realistically, could any of us shake with the four species, the *arba minim*, plucked from a gateway over which was inscribed *Arbeit Macht Frei*? Most of us will answer in the resounding negative.

By the time of the Talmud, Gei Ben Hinnom was a place where the horrors of the past were confined to that past. Thankfully, Jews and their neighbors from Second Temple times onward had moved beyond the sins of child sacrifice. This made the valley a kind of monument to atrocity — and the practice of going there to harvest a lulav a way of engaging with that history.

I would argue that an active and painful struggle to face the mistakes of our past is how a lulav from the gateway to Gehinnom can be kosher. How powerful it would be to grasp it, stand up and say, in the traditional refrain recited on Sukkot: *Anah Hashem hoshia na, ana Hashem hatzlicha na!* (Please, God, redeem us. Please, God, save us.) God, save us from perpetuating the hellish cruelties of our ancestors! God, make our attempts to change the world successful!

**Rabbi Johnny Solomon** writes:<sup>6</sup>

*Our daf* (Sukkah 32a) records a fascinating discussion between Ravina and Rav Ashi relating to the identity of the Lulav. Ravina asks ‘How do we know that the phrase כַּפַּת תְּמָרִים (Vayikra 23:40) – meaning ‘the branches of palm trees’ - refers to the unopened palm frond? Perhaps it means the thorny branches of the palm tree?’

In response to this question, Abaye presents a fascinating halachic principle derived from Mishlei 3:17 which teaches us וְכָל דְרָכֶיהָ נְעִים וְכָל נְתִיבֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם – ‘Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace’ – namely that the Torah and its mitzvot are meant to be pleasant. Consequently, given the two possible ways of explaining כַּפַּת תְּמָרִים, he explains that it is clear that the Torah would wish that we avoid using the branch with thorns, and that we use the smoother palm frond.

Significantly, this same verse from Mishlei is also invoked by Abaye in Sukkah 32b to identify the עֲנַף עֵץ עֵבֶת (Vayikra 23:40) – meaning ‘the shoot of a plaited tree’. This is because while this term could refer to the myrtle, it could also refer to the oleander plant. However, given that the oleander plant has sharper leaves, Abaye explains that the Torah must be referring to the myrtle.

But the application of Mishlei 3:17 does not end with the Talmudic discussion of the lulav and the myrtle. In fact, this verse has been invoked by many poskim (halachic decisors) either as part of their own halachic decision-making process<sup>7</sup> or as a message to future halachic decision-makers. As the Netziv writes in his final line of a responsum, *‘May God protect us from the pitfalls of making decisions that are too strict, for we say about the Torah that “Her ways are ways of pleasantness etc.”’* (Meishiv Davar no. 1:30).

In conclusion, there are times when the texts and logic of Jewish law can be interpreted in multiple ways. Yet when this occurs, the ethic expressed in Mishlei 3:17 becomes a final arbiter for we believe, as the Ralbag explains on that verse, that *‘the ways of the Torah are ways which should be very pleasant and sweet to a person. The [Torah] should not be a burden on any individual or cause them difficulties. Instead, anything that stems from... the mitzvot should be pleasant and desirous in their nature’*.

**Shulchan Aruch (OC 646:3):**

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<sup>6</sup> www.rabbijohnnysolomon.com

<sup>7</sup> for some good examples, see Responsa Radbaz no. 1052 & Mishpetei Uziel 5724 No. 4

ענף עץ עבות האמור בתורה, הוא ההדס שעליו חופין את עצו; כגון שלשה עלין או יותר, בגבעול אחד; אבל אם היו שני העלים בשוה, זה כנגד זה, והעלה השלישי למעלה מהם, אין זה עבות אבל נקרא: הדס שוטה:

*Thick branch of tree spoken in Tora is myrtle whose leaves cover the stem, at least three leaves at the same level. But if two leaves are at one level but the third is higher, this is not the "thick", this species is called "mad myrtle".*



**Above is at left a regular myrtle, and at right a "mad" myrtle (called mad because of the inability to line up)**

הגה - ופסול אפי' בשעת הדחק; ואיכא מאן דאמר בגמרא דכשר; וע"כ נוהגין באלו המדינות לכתחלה לצאת באלו ההדסים המובאים ואין ג' עלין בגבעול אחד; ויש מי שכתב דהדסים שלנו אין נקראים הדס שוטה, הואיל והם שנים על גב שנים ואינן כהדס שוטה המוזכר בגמרא; ולכן נהגו להקל כמו שכתב מהר"י קלון ומהר"י איסרלך ז"ל בתשובותיהם:

The mad myrtle is not regular even if there is nothing else; but some poskim allows. Because of this Last opinion in Central and Eastern Europe they carry out the mitzva with imported myrtles which have not three leaves at the same level.

Some poskim said that our myrtles are not mad myrtle because there are only two leaves at each level contrarily to the mad myrtle which has an irregular row of three. This is the reason of our lenient custom.

Species with rows of three leaves are regular according to the Rama, but rows of 3 not line up leaves are not Kasher.

There are myrtle branches with rows of 2 leaves. Poskim discussed if they are also not Kasher, and the minhag was to use them lechatchila.

Some beautiful myrtles result from crossing of species and are not true myrtle, and therefore are not Kasher, they were imported from Italy.<sup>8</sup>

## **Hadasim<sup>9</sup>**

In reference to the triple-leaved hadas the Torah states "a thickly-leaved branch." Its leaves hide its stem, and the leaves grow in a formation along the stem, with clusters of three parallel leaves growing, each from its own petiole, around the stem at short intervals.



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<sup>8</sup> <https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/76975/is-there-a-specific-type-of-myrtle-hadass-for-sukkot>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.halachipedia.com/index.php?title=Hadasim>

1. One should use three hadasim for the mitzvah. Each hadas should be at least 3 Tefachim in length. <sup>[1]</sup>
2. The hadas should have rows of three leaves spanning the length of the branch. The feature of each cluster of leaves growing from one level along the branch's stem, is imperative for the mitzvah because the branch is invalid without it. According to the Talmud, the hadas must be meshulash. One can check for these rows at arm's length. <sup>[2]</sup>
3. Therefore, a hadas that has only two leaves growing at each level on its stem is invalid for the mitzvah. <sup>[3]</sup>
4. If leaves fell off such that rows of three leaves cover only a majority of the branch (or a majority of the length requirement for the mitzvah if one has a long branch), the hadas is acceptable. <sup>[4]</sup>
5. If the leaves become dry to the point where they easily wither away when one presses a fingernail to them and they lose their green color, the hadas is pasul. If, however, three green leaves in a row at the top of the hadas remain, the hadas is valid. <sup>[5]</sup>
6. A Hadas that has more berries, whether they are red or black, than leaves is invalid. <sup>[6]</sup>



### **Which Hadasim are best?**

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1. It is best to choose hadasim that have many leaves close together so that the stem is completely covered by the leaves. <sup>[7]</sup>

### **How big are the leaves of Hadasim?**

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1. The individual leaves of the hadasim should be approximately the size of the thumbnail. Some Poskim rule that if a hadas has large, wide leaves it is a hadas shote and is invalid for the performance of the mitzvah. <sup>[8]</sup>

### **Does a severed tip of a hadas invalidate it?**

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1. If the tip of the stem of the hadas was broken or cut off it is still kosher and one may recite the beracha over it. Nevertheless, it is best that hadasim have their tips intact. <sup>[9]</sup>

### **What is the minimum length of a hadas?**

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1. According to Maran, a hadas must be at least three Tefachim or 20 centimeters long. However, other poskim maintain that the minimum length of a hadas is 24

centimeters. It is recommended that one choose hadasim that are at least 24 centimeters long in order to fulfill the mitzvah according to all poskim.<sup>[10]</sup>

## What if the leaves of the hadasim are dry?

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1. If most of the leaves of someone's hadasim have become completely dry but at least one set of three leaves at the top of each hadas is still fresh, the hadasim are still kosher.<sup>[11]</sup>

## What if the leaves of the hadasim have withered?

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1. If the leaves of the hadasim have withered, the hadasim are still kosher.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Sources

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1. ↑ Rambam (7:7) and Shulchan Aruch (651:1) rule in accordance with Rabbi Yishmael, who requires three hadasim and two aravot. The Rama adds that in extenuating circumstances, one may use just one hadas. Regarding their sizes, Shulchan Aruch (650:1) rules like Tosfot that the minimum size for both hadasim and aravot is 10 etzba'ot; however, he also mentions the Rif's opinion of 12 etzba'ot (see note 3).
2. ↑
  - The Gemara (32b) considers a hadas with rows of two leaves and one leaf on top to be a hadas shoteh, or "unstable" hadas. The Gemara understands the requirement for rows of three leaves (meshulashim) to be the explanation of "avot," the Torah's description of the hadas.
  - Halichot Shlomo (Ibid.) rules that the determining factor for meshulashim is the location of the stems of the leaves. Additionally, he explains that a row of leaves is considered meshulash if the three stems are in close proximity such that it would be possible to draw a horizontal circumference of the branch that would intersect with all three stems (see diagram). Rav Yigal Ariel (Techumin 11:177) understands that it is sufficient if the leaves are roughly in rows of three and do not blatantly deviate from rows. Rav Chaim Jachter (Ibid.) notes that the common practice of some gedolim was to analyze the hadas at arm's length to make this determination. Yalkut Yosef (646:8) rules that ideally the leaves should cover the entire branch.
3. ↑ The Rama (646:3) quotes a minhag to be lenient if there are two leaves above another two leaves, though the Mishna Brurah (646:15) rules that one should ideally not rely on this minhag. Yalkut Yosef (646:2) writes that such a hadas is invalid.
4. ↑ Shulchan Aruch (646:5) rules that one ideally should have the leaves be in rows of three for the entire length of the hadas; nevertheless, one fulfills his obligation if the leaves are in rows of three for the majority of the branch. Mishna Brurah (646:18) states that this majority refers to a majority of the minimum size of a hadas branch. Thus, since the hadas should be 12 etzba'ot, a majority would only require no more than 6 etzba'ot, even if the hadas is larger than its necessary 12 etzba'ot.
  - If only two leaves remain in each row for a majority of the hadas, Mishna Brurah (Ibid.) rules that one may be lenient in extenuating circumstances.
5. ↑ Shulchan Aruch (646:7) explains that for the leaves to be considered dry, they must have turned white. Mishna Brurah (646:20) notes that if they have turned white, they certainly will wither when touched. If it is difficult to determine whether one's hadas is dry, Mishna Brurah says that one can test it by putting it in water for a day or two and checking to see if it returns to its initial moist state. Shulchan Aruch (646:8) notes that if three moist leaves remain in a row at the top of the hadas, the hadas is valid. Mishna Brurah (646:21) explains that having three leaves on top allows the hadas to retain its status of hadar.
6. ↑ Shulchan Aruch 646:2
7. ↑ Yalkut Yosef, Siman 646, Seif 3. Givat Shaul, Yerushalayim: HaKeter Institute, 2010.
8. ↑ Yalkut Yosef, Siman 646, Seif 4. Givat Shaul, Yerushalayim: HaKeter Institute, 2010.
9. ↑ Yalkut Yosef, Siman 646, Seif 5. Givat Shaul, Yerushalayim: HaKeter Institute, 2010.
10. ↑ Yalkut Yosef, Siman 646, Seif 7. Givat Shaul, Yerushalayim: HaKeter Institute, 2010.
11. ↑ Yalkut Yosef, Siman 646, Seif 13. Givat Shaul, Yerushalayim: HaKeter Institute, 2010.
12. ↑ Yalkut Yosef, Siman 646, Seif 14. Givat Shaul, Yerushalayim: HaKeter Institute, 2010.



**Hadas with berries**

## **ALERT – The Great Hadasim Scam – A Halachic Analysis And Warning**

**Rabbi Yair Hoffman** writes:<sup>10</sup>

*“Psst .Â.Â. Hey, Buddy, wanna buy some arba minim? I got lulavs, esrogs, and some good hadassim for you.”*

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.5tjt.com/great-hadassim-scam/>

The hadas, or myrtle, is a woody evergreen plant with essential oils that is indigenous to the Mediterranean area. But watch out! Many know that the nickname for iron pyrite is “fool’s gold.” Few people, however, know that there are non-kosher hadassim out there called “fool’s hadassim,” or “hadas shoteh.”

There is a scandal having to do with hadassim that has not been adequately addressed. When “photocopied mezuzos” were being sold at Jewish sefarim stores and Judaica shops, the sofrim and rabbanim got together and pulled the plug on it. When falsified kosher certifications were printed on non-kosher cheese in Canada this past summer, the Canadian authorities were able to find it and stop it. Yet, for some reason, the scam involving non-triple-leaved hadassim has never been fully revealed or addressed.

## **The Problem**

What is the hadassim scam? It is a fact that is only whispered among talmidei chachamim, but very many of the hadassim that are sold are not kosher—and never were. Most of the hadassim being sold are unkosher because they do not fit the halachic requirement of meshulashim—three leaves emerging from the same circumference of the twig.

In the next daf, Sukkah 32b explains that the word “avos” used to describe the hadas plant means that the leaves are braided. In order for something to be considered braided, three strands are required.

Judaica stores that sell the hadassim (and of late the makeshift street-corner arba’ah minim dealers) should inform the consumer that the majority of hadassim are actually non-kosher—or they should stop selling the problematic ones altogether.

## **Several Violations**

There are three or four areas in which halachah is being violated by the sale of these non-kosher hadassim. First, the people who are innocently buying the arba'ah minim with hadassim that are pasul are not fulfilling the mitzvah of arba'ah minim. They could be spending \$150 on an esrog only to find that they did not fulfill the mitzvah at all since the hadassim were pasul.

The second violation is that of berachah levatalah. Those people with hadassim that are not meshulash are reciting blessings incorrectly.

The third violation is that of lifnei iver—putting a stumbling block before the blind.

And finally, the fourth possible violation: Many Rishonim are of the opinion that a non-triple-leaved hadas is actually considered a different halachic genus. If that is the case, then there is also a violation of bal tosif—the prohibition of adding to the Torah. This violation would even be violated if someone had merely added one extra hadas to three fully kosher ones. Other Rishonim hold that the violation involved in using a hadas shoteh—fool's hadas—is not that it's a different halachic species or genus, but that it is not hadar, beautiful.

How is it possible that the fool's hadas is considered a different genus? The Mishnas Yaavetz explains that it is possible for two different genera to emerge from the same parent. There is also the idea that sometimes a male offspring is permitted while a female offspring would be forbidden.

## **Defining Meshulash**

Nearby is an illustration drawn by the author of three types of hadassim leaves that come together. There are three levels of leaves in the illustration. Level (b) is considered meshulash according to all Rishonim (see Tur 646). Level (a) is considered meshulash according to some Rishonim (Tosfos [Sukkah 32b](#) “t'lasa”). Level (c) is completely non-kosher.

The Ran's opinion is that the entire hadas must be meshulash. Ideally, the Shaar HaTziyun says, we should follow this view. However, the Shulchan Aruch 646:5 states that if the majority of the hadas is meshulash, the hadas is kosher b'dieved. According to the simple understanding of this halachah, the hadas must be 3 tefachim (handbreadths) in length, and the majority of the hadas—which must be greater than 1.5 tefachim—must be meshulash.

In practical terms, according to Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt'l, there must be 5.4 inches of meshulash hadas. According to the Chazon Ish, there must be 6 inches. And according to Rav Chaim Na'eh, zt'l, there must be 5 inches.



## How To Measure the Meshulash Portions

The ruling of the Acharonim is that the area that is meshulash does not need to be consecutive, as long as it constitutes the majority of the total hadas (see PMG MZ 646:9 and Shulchan Aruch HaRav #3). Some Acharonim even imply that it is kosher even if the hadas is bigger than 3 tefachim and the meshulash area is only slightly more than 1.5 tefachim (see Bikkurei Yaakov #14). The Mishnah Berurah is concerned, however, for the first view.

We mentioned above that according to the simple understanding of the halachah, one would need to have more than 1.5 tefachim of meshulash for the hadas to be kosher. This is the way the Chazon Ish indicates that the halachah may be. There is, however, a possibility that we do not calculate meshulash by mere distance, but rather by the number of leaf levels. That's right—when it says majority of the hadas, it could mean that out of 29 leaf levels, only 15 of them need to be meshulash, and since the leaf levels are shorter and thus more numerous toward the top of the hadas, maybe we have a majority of leaf levels.

The Shulchan Aruch HaRav clearly implies that a majority of the number of leaf levels is how we calculate the requirement of meshulash. Those that follow Lubavitch custom can calculate by the number of leaf levels. If you happen to have purchased a semi-problematic set of hadassim, then ask your rav.

There are other halachos that may render a hadas invalid, such as the top wood missing or if it is too dried out and withered. There is even a problem of a grafted hadas, if one knows clearly that it was grafted. This article has dealt solely with the concept of meshulash.

## The Laws of the Hadas

**Rabbi Ido Yaakovi** writes:<sup>11</sup>

Our sages learnt from the verse "And ye shall take you on the first day... and boughs of thick trees" ( Vayikra 23, 40) that one of the four species is Hadas - myrtle . We take 3 branches of Hadas that have 3 leaves growing from each point.

- **Hadas grapes / fruit** - If the Hadas has more fruit than the leaves, it's Pasul. Purple, black or red fruit aren't the color of the Hadas and are Pasul. (The Mishna Berurah doubted about green fruit). The fruit can be taken off (not on Yom Tov) and the Hadas will be Kosher. .
- The myrtle leaves should cover the branch (It is preferable that the bottom leaf will reach the leaf above, since the Mor Uktziah said that this is necessary, though the Chazon Ish and Bikkurei Yaakov argued ). Sometimes, when the myrtles are in the shade, the leaves open, but it is still Kosher.

***Hadas Shoteh is a Hadas without triple leaves and they don't cover its branch. Such a Hadas is Pasul.***

- **The Hadas should be "Avot" - thick** which means that all three leaves should start from the same height. The Chazon Ish holds it is enough if you can draw a line through the leaves stems. Some hold that all three leaves should start from exactly the same line (Rashi), such a Hadas is considered better. Rabbi Shlomo Zalman holds its enough that part of the stem meets, so they can be in a line of about 2 mm thick. It is better that all the Hadas is triple and "Avot" but also mostly Avot is Kosher.
- **Length** - the branches of Hadas should be 3 Tefachim - 24 cm according to the Grach Naeh and according to the Chazon Ish - 29 cm. The length does not include the green leaves at the end.
- **The size of the leaves** - the leaves should be at least as big as a fingernail or as up to the joint. They shouldn't be too small.
- **Truncated** - we should try to get Hadasim that aren't truncated , though some hold its Kosher.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.yeshiva.co/rabbi/90>

- **Height in relation to the lulav** - the spine of the lulav should be a Tefach (8-10 cm) longer than the Hadas and willow. Therefore, we should not buy a short Lulav and ‘giant’ Hadasim.
- **Keeping the Hadas** - it is better to keep the Hadasim in a sealed bag in the refrigerator and not in a wet towel since that causes the leaves to fall.

## **Hadassim Meshulashim**

**Rabbi Chaim Jachter** writes:<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of selecting a Kosher set of the Four Minim is finding Hadassim that are Meshulashim. This term refers to Hadassim whose three leaves emerge at the same level. There are many opinions regarding the precise parameters regarding Hadassim Meshulashim; therefore, it seems to be a positive development that today, many sets of Hadassim come in packages that have been checked by a competent rabbinic authority. In this essay we shall seek to discuss many of the issues regarding Hadassim Meshulashim.

### *Hadass Shoteh*

Interestingly, the Gemara (Sukkah 32b) refers to a Hadas that is not Meshulash as a “*Hadass Shoteh*,” a psychotic Hadas. An explanation might be that a Hadas that is Meshulash is balanced whereas the Hadas that is not Meshulash is imbalanced. A characteristic of a mentally healthy person is one who is balanced and one who is not mentally healthy is not balanced.

Indeed, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik is quoted by Rav Hershel Schachter (Mipinei Rabbeinu p. 201) as explaining that a Katan (a boy below the age of Bar Mitzva) and a K’tanah (a girl below the age of Bat Mitzvah) are considered to be mentally incompetent (“Lav B’nai Dei’ah Ninhu”) because they are not yet psychologically balanced. For example, the Rav notes that, as parents and others who deal regularly with children are acutely aware, when a child is happy, he is thoroughly happy with no bit of sadness evident. On the other hand, when a child is sad, he is completely sad, without any hint of happiness. Rav Soloveitchik asserts that a psychologically healthy and mature individual will never be completely happy or completely sad. Even in moments of great joy and sorrow we seek to maintain our composure and not be entirely swept

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.koltorah.org/halachah/hadassim-meshulashim-by-rabbi-chaim-jachter>

away by emotion. Accordingly, we can understand why Chazal refer to a Hadas whose leaves are not “balanced” as a Hadas Shoteh.”

### *Understanding the Requirement for Hadasim Meshulashim*

The Rambam in Hilchot Lulav 7:1-2 outlines the basic definitions of each of the Four Minim. Interestingly, the Rambam mentions the requirement of Hadassim Meshulashim in his initial presentation and identification of Hadassim as Anaf Eitz Avot. The Rambam writes:

*“The term Pri Eitz Hadar that is mentioned in the Torah refers to an Etrog. The term Anaf Eitz Avot refers to the Hadas whose leaves covers its branch and whose three or more leaves are in one stem. If two of the leaves are even and the third leaf is above it, this is not “Avot” [as described in the Torah], rather it is a Hadas Shoteh.”*

In contrast, the Rambam addresses all of the other details regarding Hadassim considerably later in Hilchot Lulav (8:5) Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (cited in Reshimot Shiurim to Masechet Sukkah p. 154) quotes his illustrious grandfather Rav Chaim Soloveitchik in explaining why the Rambam presents the requirement of Meshulash separate from all the other Halachot regarding Hadassim. Rav Chaim asserted that a Hadas that is not Meshulash is not merely not an invalid Hadas, it is simply not a Hadas. A Hadas, for example, that has more blackberries on it than leaves is an invalid Hadas, whereas a Hadas that is not Meshulash is regarded a different species – a Hadas Shoteh. This explains why the Rambam presents the issue of Hadassim Meshulashim in his initial description of Hadassim and separate from the other Halachot concerning Hadassim. The requirement for Hadassim Meshulashim reflects of the basic identity of the Hadassim and is not a detail that can be saved for later discussion.

Rav Herschel Reichman (in his notes to his aforementioned Reshimot Shiurim) explains that even though a Hadas Shoteh and a Hadas Meshulash grow in the same bush, nevertheless they are considered to be different species regarding the Halachot of the Yom Tov of Sukkot. Rav Reichman adds that even though a Hadas Shoteh and Hadas Meshulash are not considered to be separate species regarding the Halachot of Kilayim (the prohibition to plant different species together), nevertheless a Hadas Shoteh is regarded as a different species regarding of Sukkot.

Rav Chaim’s assertion has at least two practical ramifications. First is that a Hadas Shoteh is unacceptable on all seven days of Sukkot. Indeed, the Meiri writes (Sukkah 29b) that a Hadas Shoteh is unacceptable all seven days of Sukkot “since it is not a Hadas”. Many disqualifications in the Four Minim are acceptable on the last six last of Sukkot (in Eretz Yisrael and the last five days in Chutz La’aretz) such as an Etrog that has a small piece of it that is missing (Chaseir). An Etrog that is Chaseir is acceptable on the last days of Sukkot because even though an Etrog Chaseir is an Etrog with a P’sul (disqualification), it is still defined as an Etrog. On the other hand, a Hadas Shoteh is not considered a Hadas and is thus unacceptable even on the last days of Sukkot. Just as one cannot take a pear instead of an Etrog even on the last days of Sukkot, so too one cannot take a Hadas Shoteh even on the last days of Sukkot. The reason for the leniencies

on the last days of Sukkot is because the requirement to take the Four Minim during those days is merely rabbinic in nature.

A second ramification is that a Hadas Shoteh is unacceptable even “B’sha’at Hadchak”(a case of pressing need). Indeed, the Rav (ibid) reported that his illustrious father, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, ruled during the extremely difficult times of World War I that Hadassim that are not Meshulashim are not acceptable even during those times of deprivation. Even though the Rama (O.C. 649:6) rules that one may recite a Bracha on a Lulav HaYavesh (a desiccated Lulav), Rav Moshe felt that a Hadas that is not Meshulash is not a Hadas, unlike a Lulav HaYavesh, which is defined as a Lulav, albeit a Lulav that is disqualified. Just as one cannot take an orange instead of an Etrog even Bisha’at Hadchak, so too one cannot take a Hadas Shoteh even B’sha’at HaD’chak (also see Rama O.C. 646:4 and Mishna Brura 646:15).

### *Rov Meshulash*

The Raavad (commenting on the Rambam’s Hilchot Lulav 7:2) writes that the Hadas must be “entirely Meshulash or a majority Meshulash”. The Rosh (Sukkah 3:10) explains that the Raavad believes that it is best for the Hadas to be entirely Meshulash but it suffices if a majority of the Hadas is Meshulash. The Maggid Mishneh (commenting on the Rambam Hilchot Lulav 7:2) insists that the entire Hadas be Meshulash. The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 646:5) rules in accordance with the opinion of the Raavad and the Rosh. For an analysis of the dispute between the Raavad and the Maggid Mishneh, see Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (cited in Reshimot Shiurim to Masechet Sukkah p. 154) and Rav Yigal Ariel (Techumin 11:188-189). For a critique of the Rav’s analysis, see my essay that appears in HaDarom 5760.

A Hadas must minimally be three Tephachim long (Sukkah 32b). Thus the Hadas must be Meshulash along a majority of its minimum three Tephachim length. Twentieth century authorities, however, engage in a major and unresolved debate about the exact measurement of a Tephach (see the Encyclopedia Talmudit for a summary and sources of the many opinions). According to the Chazon Ish a Tephach is 3.8 inches, it is 3.6 inches according to Rav Moshe Feinstein and the Aruch Hashulchan, and according to Rav Avraham Chaim Na’eh it is 3.2 inches. I have seen many Hadassim packages that state that their contents are a majority Meshulash according to the Shiur (measurement) of the Chazon Ish.

The Chazon Ish (O.C. 146) is uncertain how to gauge whether a majority of a Hadas is Meshulash, and whether we determine it by a majority of the branch or a majority of the leaf levels. It appears to me that the straightforward reading of Mishna Brura (646:18) indicates that we determine it by the majority of the branch. In my aforementioned essay that appears in HaDarom 5760, I present an argument which seeks to prove that this is the correct approach since it is conceptually consistent with the Shulchan Aruch’s ruling that it is sufficient for a majority of the branch to be Meshulash.

Rav Melech Schachter (father of Rav Hershel Schachter) advises that if a Hadas is longer than the minimum three Tephachim and its bottom part that is longer than the necessary three

Tephachim has leaf levels that are not Meshulash, then one should cut off that bottom portion of the Hadas. One must be certain that a Shiur of three Tephachim remain, though, and that he does not cut off the top of the Hadas as this might disqualify the Hadas (see Shulchan Aruch O.C. 646:10).

### *What is a Hadas Meshulash?*

Accordingly, we see the paramount importance of taking a Hadas Meshulash. We must, however, specifically define the requirement of Meshulash. The Gemara (Sukkah 32b states that “the three leaves should be in one root”. Rashi understands the Gemara literally as defining Meshulash as “three leaves that emerge from one bud”. Tosafot (ad. loc. s.v. T’latah) comment on Rashi’s explanation that “it is a profound stringency, as it is rare to find this”. Tosafot suggest a non-literal interpretation of the Gemara (based on a parallel term that appears in Bava Kama 58a) that the three leaves being in very close proximity to each other, even if they do not emerge from one bud, is the equivalent of the three leaves “being in one root”. The Rosh (Sukkah 3:8) cites Tosafot’s suggestion as authoritative and without any reservations. He writes that the Hadassim are defined as Meshulashim if they are “in one circle”. The Shulchan Aruch (646:3, according to the understanding of the Mishna Brura 646:10) rules in accordance with Tosafot and the Rosh. Rashi’s definition is not even mentioned by the Shulchan Aruch or its major commentaries as worthwhile accommodating even by the most pious individuals.

Tosafot’s argument bothers my Talmidim, as it seems that they are merely interpreting the Halacha to suit their convenience. I respond that the Torah is by definition practical and “doable”, as is specifically stated in D’varim (30:14) “the matter is very near to you in your mouth and your heart to perform it”. The Torah must be possible to implement. If an interpretation of the Tanach or Gemara makes a Halacha nearly impossible to implement in practice, Chazal consider the possibility that the interpretation is incorrect. Indeed, the Gemara (Sukkah 32b) cites Rava’s criticizing a stringent ruling that Rabi Tarfon issued in the context of Hadassim Meshulashim, saying that Rabi Tarfon’s ruling makes it nearly impossible to fulfill the Mitzva of Hadassim. Tosafot, in turn, criticize Rashi’s interpretation in a similar manner.

We should note that it seems that the far-reaching leniencies regarding Hadassim Meshulashim that Rama (O.C. 646:3) cites, should be understood in light of this understanding of Tosafot. We must emphasize, though, that Tosafot have a textual basis for their lenient approach and that they did not contrive an interpretation with no basis in the text of the Gemara. Orthodox Judaism utterly rejects the notion that “where there is a rabbinic will, there is a rabbinic way” is heresy (see Rashi, Yoma 40b s.v. Al Titnu Makom La’tz’dukkin).

It also seems to be that the Shulchan Aruch codifies the opinion of the Raavad that a majority of the branch being Meshulash suffices because it is difficult to find enough Hadasim that are completely Meshulashim to satisfy the needs of an entire community. Indeed, Rav Yigal Ariel (Techumin 11:177) reports that in his experience supervising the marketing of Hadassim that are grown in the area of the Golan Heights, he finds that after examining hundreds of thousands of Hadassim that only twenty percent of Hadassim are entirely Meshulash, even allowing for minor imperfections in the Hadassim.

## *Practical Implementation of this Halacha*

The question remains how to practically implement the requirement that the three Hadassim must be “in one circle”. Finding a Hadas whose three leaves are perfectly aligned for the entire length of three Tephachim in accordance with the Shiur of the Chazon Ish, is a very difficult task, as many know from experience. Indeed, I heard Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik state that it took his grandfather Rav Chaim Soloveitchik many hours to find Hadassim that were Meshulashim according to his standards. Rav Yigal Ariel (Techumin 11:177) reports that in his experience he finds that only a tiny percentage of Hadassim are “perfect” and meet the highest standards. As we stated earlier, this standard cannot be what the Torah expects from every Jew, as it is nearly impossible to implement (though perhaps with genetic manipulation it is possible to achieve – the question remains whether the Torah requires us to engage in such “heroics” in order to fulfill the most stringent standard).

A somewhat more practical standard is cited in the name of the Chazon Ish by Rav Shmuel Graineman (Chiddushim U’biurim Sukkah number 5). He considers a Hadas as Meshulash as long as the bases of the three leaves meet at some line, even if there are slight differences between the levels of bases. Pictures and diagrams to make this point clear appear in Rav Yechezkel Michel Stern’s Halachot of the Four Species p.111. Rav Graineman adds that the Chazon Ish clarifies that he does not consider this to be the absolute baseline Shiur, but that this approach is definitely acceptable beyond any question.

Rav Yigal Ariel adds that the basic standard appears to be that as long as the leaves do not blatantly deviate from their row, the Hadas is considered to be Meshulash. It seems to me that this matter probably depends on how close one must examine the Hadassim to ensure that they are Meshulashim. Indeed, Rav Yosef Adler reports that Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik examined Etrogim at arm’s length. I have heard that was also the practice of Rav Moshe Feinstein. Rav Ariel’s assertion is especially convincing if Halacha only requires an examination from an arm’s length to determine that the Hadassim are Meshulashim. One should consult with his Rav to determine if a Hadas that is Safek Meshulash (doubtful if it is Meshulash) is acceptable on the last six days of Sukkot when the obligation to take Lulav is merely rabbinic in nature

## *Conclusion*

Today it is very common to purchase packaged Hadassim that have been inspected by competent rabbinic authorities. The obvious advantage of this system is that it ensures that the Hadassim one purchases are Kosher, as is not simple for a non-expert to determine the Kashrut of a Hadas. It is similar to other relatively recently introduced practices such as meat and poultry that are soaked and salted before purchase and packaged romaine lettuce that is inspected under rabbinical supervision for bugs. These recent innovations enable a larger circle of individuals to properly observe the Halacha. A disadvantage, though, is that it eliminates opportunities for parents and teachers to transmit the hands-on skills necessary for Torah observance to the next generation. It also eliminates a bit of the personal and emotional connection to the Mitzvot we observe by reducing the time that is necessary to invest to insure proper Halachic observance. However, it seems that the advantages of the new system outweigh the

disadvantages as we have seen that it is both vital and challenging to ensure that one takes Hadassim that are authentically Meshulashim. Of course, one must ascertain that the Hadassim have indeed been inspected by competent rabbinic authority.



## **How to choose Arba Minim Four Species in a nutshell**

**Rabbi David Samson** writes:<sup>13</sup>

*What type of things should I be on the lookout for when buying my Four Species for Sukkot?*

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.yeshiva.co/midrash/22543>

First of all, there are lots of laws regarding the "Arba Minim," or Four Species. Therefore, one should take care to buy them from a reliable source that has rabbinic approval. For instance, the Etrog is sometimes grafted with lemons. The resulting species looks like an Etrog, but it is not kosher for use on Sukkot. Therefore, when one buys an Etrog, it is important to verify that the grove where the fruit grew has a reliable tradition of producing genuine Etrogim and not lemons.

The Torah states: "You should take for yourself on the first day, the fruit of a beautiful tree." Since the Torah requires that the Four Species be of exceptional appearance, the splendor of the Etrog is of utmost concern. The most common disqualification is a discoloring of the skin; including even one tiny black dot on the upper half of the fruit, or more than two dots on the lower half. Since gray or brown dots may seem black to an untrained eye, either the use of magnifying glass, or an expert opinion is vital in cases of doubt.

The Lulav should be from a date palm, at least four handbreadths in length (approximately 40 centimeters,) green and fresh, and as straight as possible. Also the top middle leaf should not be split.

The three Hadasim, myrtle branches, must be at least three handbreadths (approximately 25 centimeters,) green, and most of the branch must be covered with the myrtle's characteristic three-clustered leaves.

The two Aravot, willow branches, should not be from a weeping willow tree. The branches should be reddish in appearance; the leaves should be elongated and not serrated; and they should not be brittle and dry. In fact, there are people who change their Aravot every day of the holiday to make sure they are fresh. Keeping them in a vase of water or the refrigerator should do the trick.

Whenever in doubt about the kashrut of a species, it is imperative to ask a rabbi for his halachic decision.

When the first day of the Sukkot holiday falls on Shabbat, we do not wave the species on the first day. Because the laws regarding the Four Species are less stringent on the other days, some borderline species may be perfectly kosher. Again, it is best to ask a rabbi when in doubt. However, all those who desire to be saintly with their Maker should certainly strive to have the most beautiful set of species for the whole holiday.

A common element of the Four Species is that they all grow around water. At this time of the year, at the beginning of the rainy season in Israel, let us all pray that the Almighty will look favorably on our waving of the Four Species and bless us abundantly with rain, and with every other good blessing in the New Year.

## Sukkot's Unshaken Four Species

*Building materials or trail mix? How Karaite Jews read Leviticus 23:40, which describes the mitzvah of taking (ולקחתם) the four species, in light of Nehemiah 8:15.*

Shawn Joe Lichaa writes:<sup>14</sup>



Rina Smilansky Garden of the four species in Rehovot.

ד"ר אבישי טייכר

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.thetorah.com/article/sukkots-unshaken-four-species>

For Rabbinic Jews, the holiday of Sukkot has two distinct mitzvot: the sukkah and the four species (ארבעת המינים). The latter is often referred to as the “*lulav* and *etrog*.” Rabbinic Jews take the *lulav*, made up of three species (palm, myrtle, and willow), and the *etrog* (the fourth species) and shake them. The Rabbis derive the mitzvah of taking the *lulav* and *etrog* from Lev 23:40:

<p>ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר          כפת תמרים וענף עץ עבת וערבי נחל          ושמחתם לפני יהוה אלהיכם שבעת ימים.</p>	<p>And you shall take on the first day [of the Holiday]          the fruit of the goodly tree [or the goodly fruit tree],          branches of palm-trees, and boughs of thick trees,          and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice          before Adonai your God seven days.</p>
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Karaite Jews do not believe the commandment refers to taking a *lulav* and *etrog* on Sukkot (and thus do not shake them). Karaite historically have understood this verse very differently.

### **Building a Sukkah with the Four Species: The Dominant Karaite Opinion**

The Torah simply states that we are to “take” the species and “rejoice” before God for seven days (Lev 23:40). This is followed by the command to dwell in sukkot for seven days (Lev 23:42).<sup>[1]</sup> The passage, therefore, can be understood as a description of a single mitzvah, i.e., “take these various species, build a sukkah out of them, and dwell in it for seven days.”<sup>[2]</sup>

This interpretation finds support in a verse in Nehemiah regarding the holiday of Sukkot, in which Ezra tells the people to gather the leafy branches:

<p>נחמיה ח:טו צאו ההר והביאו עלי זית ועלי          עץ שקון ועלי הדס ועלי תמרים ועלי עץ          עבת לעשות סכת ככתוב.</p>	<p>Neh 8:15 Go out to the mountains and bring leafy          branches of olive trees, leafy branches of oil trees,          leafy myrtle branches, leafy palm branches, leafy          branches of a leafy tree, to make booths, as it is          written.</p>
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Assuming that the Ezra's list of leafy branches is meant as a version or interpretation of the four species,<sup>[3]</sup> then Ezra's interpretation of the verse is that the species should be taken in order to build *sukkot* (booths).<sup>[4]</sup>

### **The Four Species: Rabbinic Interpretation**

The Rabbis understand the four items mentioned in the verse as four separate species and therefore, define the *mitzvah* as the lifting of all four species, which they identify as follows:

- פרי עץ הדר (lit. fruit of a stately tree)—Citron (אתרוג)
- כפת תמרים (lit. branches of date-palms)—A closed date-palm frond (לולב)
- ענף עץ עבת (lit. the leaf of a thick tree)—Leafy myrtle branches (הדס)
- ערבי נחל (lit. willows of a brook)—Leafy willow branches (ערבות)

### **Leviticus Rabbinic Interpretation**

Whereas the Rabbanite reading of “willows of the brook” is relatively straightforward, their reading (from a Karaite perspective) of the other three species is less so. For example, the Torah specifies branches of date-palms, which Rabbanite Jews understand as closed fronds and not large leaves. The other two phrases used by the verse are even less precise. “Leaves of a thick tree” and “fruit of a stately tree” are vague, and do not imply that *only* a myrtle branch and a citron may be used. And thus, unsurprisingly, Karaite Jewish interpretation of these species differs from that of Rabbanite Jews in a number of particulars. We will look at each one in turn.

### **The Majestic Fruit of the Palm Tree: Noting the Absence of a *Vav***

The 11<sup>th</sup> century Karaite sage, Hakham Jacob ben Reuben (of Byzantium), in his commentary on Tanakh *Sefer HaOsher (The Book of Wealth)*,<sup>[5]</sup> argues that the phrase that the Rabbis believe lists the first two species is really only describing one:

פרי עץ הדר: הוא תמר, כי הוא הדר מכל עץ.	“Fruit of a stately tree” – That is, a palm ( <i>tamar</i> ), because it is the most stately ( <i>hadar</i> ) of all trees.
כפות תמרים: ולא אמר “וכפות להודיע כי פרי עץ הדר הוא כפות תמרים.”	“Fronds of Palms” – And [notice], it does not say, “and fronds”, to make it known that “fruit of a stately tree” is [equivalent to] “palm fronds.”

In other words, noting the absence of a *vav* (“and”), the *Sefer HaOsher* reads the two phrases in apposition, i.e., as one long phrase: “fruit of a stately tree, [meaning] the fronds (=fruit) of the date-palm (=stately tree).”

Daniel Al-Kumisi (10<sup>th</sup> cent., Jerusalem) supports the identification of the majestic (הדר) tree with the date-palm from a verse in Song of Songs (7:8),

זאת קומתך דמתה לתמר...

Your (stately) form is like the palm...

The verse praises the woman’s stature by comparing it to that of the date-palm, showing that the poet considered date-palms to be particularly stately or majestic.

The interpretation of “fruit” as the branches of the tree may seem counterintuitive, but it fits well with the main Karaite Jewish conception of how these items are used. In other words, since the (three or four) species were employed to build the sukkah, they were taken to refer to construction materials. A sukkah can be built with branches, but it is difficult to build them out of fruit.

### **Leafy Trees and the Verse from Ezra-Nehemiah**

The *Sefer Ha-Osher* does not interpret the “leafy branch of a thick tree” from Leviticus 23:40 to refer to something specific, and even engages in a bit of defense against Rabbanite critiques:

וענף עץ עבות: הם עלי זית והדס וכל עץ  
הדר. ואם תאמ' וענף עץ הוא הדס לא כן  
כי מצאנו בספר עזרא ועלי הדס ועלי עץ  
עבות.

“And a branch of a thick tree” – These are the foliage from olive [trees], myrtle [trees], and any stately tree. And should you say, “‘and a branch of a... tree’ can [only] be a myrtle”, that isn’t so, because we have found in the book of Ezra <sup>[6]</sup> (Neh. 8:15), “And [the] foliage of a myrtle, and foliage of a thick tree.”

To defend his view that the Torah’s “branch of a thick tree” does not refer to a specific tree, Hakham Jacob ben Reuben quotes from the story in Nehemiah we saw above, in which Ezra lists the species the people must use on Sukkot (Neh 8:15):

צֵאוּ הַהָרִים וְהָבִיאוּ

Go out to the mountains and bring:

צֵאוּ הַהָרִים וְהָבִיאוּ      Go out to the mountains and bring:

עֲלֵי זֵית      - Leafy branches of olive trees,  
ועֲלֵי עֵץ שֶׁמֶן      - Leafy branches of oil trees, <sup>[7]</sup>  
ועֲלֵי הַדָּס      - Leafy myrtle branches,  
ועֲלֵי תְּמָרִים      - Leafy palm branches,  
ועֲלֵי עֵץ עֵבֶת      - Leafy branches of a leafy tree,

לַעֲשֹׂת סֹכֶת כְּכָתוּב.      To make booths, as it is written.

That this verse was meant to be an explanation of Lev 23:40 is clear from the ending, “as it is written [in the Torah].” Thus, the *Sefer HaOsher* points out, we see that Ezra understood the Torah’s injunction of “leafy trees” as general, since he felt no compunction about adding species;

there are five mentioned here whereas the Torah has only four (or three according to *Sefer HaOsher*).

## Nehemiah and Leviticus: Can They Be Aligned?

The assumption that Nehemiah and the Torah are referring to exactly the same mitzvah is not straightforward and requires some interpretive assumptions, as note by the Karaite sage Aaron ben Elijah (c.1328-1369) in his halachic work, *Gan Eden*.<sup>[8]</sup>

וחכמים הציעו פירושים לישוב שני המאמרים כאחד כי כל הנוכר בפסוק האחד הוא הנוכר בפסוק האחר. ואמנם החלוק שמצאנו ביניהם הוא כי ערבי נחל שנוכרים בתורה אינם נזכרים בעזרא ועלי זית ועלי עץ שמן ועלי הדס שנוכרים בעזרא אינם נזכרים בתורה. אם שני המאמרים כאחד צריך להשוות את שניהם.	The sages suggested various interpretations to make the two passages cohere, i.e., to make everything mentioned in one match up with what is mentioned in the other. Now the difference that we find in the two passages is that “willows of the brook” mentioned in the Torah are not mentioned in Ezra, whereas “olive tree leaves, oil tree leaves, and myrtle leaves” mentioned in Ezra are not mentioned in the Torah. But if the two passages are saying the same thing, it is necessary to make the two cohere.
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Nehemiah mentioned olive trees and (olive) oil trees, neither of which appear in the Torah. To make this work, some sages divided between the stately tree (פרי עץ הדר) and date-palm branches (כפות תמרים), by claiming that the former refers to the olive and olive-oil trees mentioned in Nehemiah.<sup>[9]</sup> (Personally, I have always loved the interpretation of the olive tree as the עץ הדר, and each year, I cut branches from my cousins’ olive tree in order to decorate my sukkah.)

## Willows

The verse in Nehemiah makes no mention of willows. To solve this problem, some Karaite scholars say that “willows of the brook” is actually a reference to myrtles. To back this up, they note Zechariah 1:8, which describes myrtles growing near water:

<p>ראיתי הלילה והנה איש רכב על סוס אדם והוא עמד בין ההדסים אשר במקלה...</p>	<p>In the night, I had a vision. I saw a man, mounted on a bay horse, standing among the myrtles in the Deep (water)...</p>
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Binyamin al-Nahawendi (early 9<sup>th</sup> cent. Persia), who believed נחל ערבי to be willows, offered a creative reading of Nehemiah aimed at “finding” the missing willows:

<p>על כן לא אמר ערבי נחל בעזרא מפני שאמר צאו ההר וטעמו עלו אתם ההר והביאו אשר נמצא בהר ואנחנו נביא ערבי נחל.</p>	<p>Here is why it doesn't say “willows of the brook” in Ezra: Because [Ezra] said: “Go to the hills,” and what this means is: Go to the hills and bring whatever you find on the hills, and we will bring willows from the brook.</p>
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## The Trail Mix Basket: A Minority Karaite Opinion

Separating between the Mitzvah of the Species and that of the Sukkah

A minority of Karaite Jewish sages separate the mitzvah described in Nehemiah, which most Karaites interpret to be about building a sukkah, from the *mitzvah* described in Lev 23:40. These scholars note that the passages are not really linked and are indeed interrupted by v. 41:

<p>ויקרא כג:מ' ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר כפת תמרים וענף עץ עבת וערבי נחל ושמתם לפני י-הוה אלהיכם שבעת ימים. כג:מ"א וחתם אתו חג לי-הוה שבעת ימים בשנה חקת עולם לדורותיכם בחדש השבועי תחגו אתו. כג:מ"ב בסכת תשבּו שבעת ימים כל האזרח בישׂראל ישבו בסכת.</p>	<p>Lev 23:40 On the first day <b>you shall take</b> the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. <sup>23:41</sup> You shall observe it as a festival of the LORD for seven days in the year; you shall observe it in the seventh month as a law for all time, throughout the ages. <sup>23:42</sup> <b>You shall live in booths</b> seven days.</p>
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But if vv. 40 and 42 do not refer to a single commandment, to what does v. 40 refer? Picking up on the reference to fruit, these Karaite scholars—admittedly a minority—understand the mitzvah as a requirement to eat delicious fruit throughout the holiday. *Sefer Gan Eden* writes:

<p>והנה במאמר ולקחתם לכם פירשו בו מן  חכמינו שהרצון בו לקחת פרי עץ הדר כגון  אתרוגין ותפוחין חולתם בכפות תמרים –  שצריך תוספת בי"ת – וענף עץ עבות  וערבי נחל לעשות אותם אגודות לשמוח  בהם באכילת הפרי ובטלטולו שאמר  ולקחתם ושמחתם.</p>	<p>With regard to the statement “and you shall take”  some of our sages have understood this to mean  that we should take the goodly fruit of trees, like  citrons and apples and the like, inside the leaves of  palms – the verse needs to be read with an  understood <i>bet</i> (“inside”) – and the leaves of thick  trees and the leaves of willows of the brook, to wrap  them together, and then to enjoy them by eating  the fruit and carrying them around, for it says “and  you shall take them... and you shall rejoice.”<sup>[10]</sup></p>
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There is certain intuitive appeal to this interpretation, since Sukkot is an agricultural holiday and the Israelites might have understood eating the species as commemorating the agricultural aspect of the holiday. Tomer Mangoubi, a Karaite contemporary, has suggested that the Karaite sages who believed the species were to be eaten, might have relied in part on Deuteronomy 14:26,<sup>[11]</sup> which is often understood as taking place during the holiday of Sukkot when the *ma'aser* (tithe) is brought to the Temple. In both verses *vesamachta* appears to have a similar meaning, and in the *ma'aser* verse, there is an explicit connection to eating.<sup>[12]</sup>

<p>...ואכלתם שם לפני יהוה אלהיך ושמחתם...</p>	<p>...and you shalt eat there before Adonai your God,  and you shall rejoice...</p>
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### Reconciling the “Trail Mix” Opinion with the Verse in Nehemiah

But how does this interpretation that the four species are edible fruit wrapped in pretty leaves connect to Ezra’s injunction to take slightly different species to “make sukkot, as it is written”? The Karaites themselves addressed these issues and raised two possibilities.

First, the phrase לעשות סוכות (which most Karaites understand to mean, “to make booths”) could be referring to doing the holiday of Sukkot, and not to making the *sukkot* (booths) themselves, just as the Torah says “to make Shabbat” (לעשות את השבת) (Exod 31:16). The Karaite sages who hold that the species are for construction have obviously rejected this argument. For example, the syntax between the two sentences is different (i.e., if Nehemiah 8 were referring to the holiday, one would expect to see לעשות את הסוכות).

Second, the Karaites who hold the “trail mix” opinion state that the ככתוב in Ezra may refer to the (implied) command to the build the *sukkah* (Lev 23:40-42), but it is *not* referring to the command to “take” the four species (Lev 23:40).<sup>[13]</sup>

In the end, whether you eat your four species, sit underneath them, or shake them, I wish you a chag sameach.

## Footnotes

1. For a redaction critical discussion of this section of Leviticus, see the TABS essay, “The First Sukkah.”
2. Editor’s note: The Israelite-Samaritan community interprets the verse this way as well. For more discussion of this, including what they define as the four species, see Benyamim Tsedaka’s TABS essay, “A Fruity Sukkah Made from the Four Species.”
3. This assumption is discussed in detail below.
4. The contours of the disagreement between the Rabbanites and the majority Karaite view are perhaps best summed up by Hacham Mordecai ben Nisan in his work *Sefer Levush Malkhuth*,  
“Thus, Ezra the Priest interpreted the manner of performing the commandment for us. But [the Rabbanites] do not heed Ezra’s interpretation; rather, they say that the verse, *ye shall take you on the first day*, is a separate commandment, aside from that of the *sukka*, an obligation to take these [plant] items and play with them.” (p. 85.)

This work has recently been published by The Karaite Press under the name *Royal Attire: on Karaite and Rabbanite Differences*.

5. This commentary remains in MS form and has not yet been published. The verses from *Sefer HaOsher* cited herein were transcribed from manuscript. I owe a debt of gratitude to Matityahu Roland for transcribing these verses, and to James Walker for translating them. To-date, the only portion of *Sefer HaOsher* that is available is the commentary the Book of Esther, published by The Karaite Press under the name *Esther Explained* (2016).
6. Both Karaite and Rabbanite Jews treat Ezra-Nehemiah as one book called Ezra. Thus, though *Sefer HaOsher* says “Ezra” he is referring to Nehemiah.
7. This is variously understood as pine (NJPS), wild olive (NRSV), or cypress (LXX).
8. See *Inyan Chag Ha-Sukkot, Ch. 1*.
9. According to Professor Phillip Birnbaum, this was the view of Hacham Yefet ben Eli (see *The Arabic Commentary of Yefet ben Ali the Karaite on the Book of Hosea*, p. xxx, republished by Library Licensing, LLC (2011)).
10. The view that the species are for eating is summarized in the *Sefer Mitzvot* of Hacham Levi ben Yefet (11<sup>th</sup> Century), who ultimately does not accept this opinion:

...פתרו ואמר כי פרי עץ הדר הוא כתפוחים ואתרוגים וכיוצא [א] בהם מן הפרות הנאים... וקרא לבעל זה הדרך לומר כי הם נאכלים מפני כי אמר

“פרי עץ הדר”... וכי יתם להיות לנו פירות אינם נאכלים כמו פרי הזתים ופרי האורן...

...[A]nd they [who believed the species are for eating] said that “the fruit of *etz hadar*” are like apples and citrons and the like – fruit that are pleasant. . . .[A]nd they who hold this way (might say that they are edible [fruit] because it said “fruit of *etz hadar*” but we see that there are fruit that are not edible like the fruit of olives and the fruit of the pine (pp. 470-471).”

I thank Tomer Mangoubi for helping me with citations to Hakham Levi ben Yefet.

11. Mangoubi acknowledges that more research needs to be done to substantiate this suggestion, but his suggestion is also based on loose inference from the *Sefer Mitzvot* of Hakham Levi ben Yefet.
12. For the connection between these verses compare Deuteronomy 14:28 with Exodus 23:16.
13. This interpretation would also allow room for the Rabbanite view that Leviticus 23 is requiring the lifting of the four species.
14. Karaite Jews of Egypt: From 1882-1985 (first edition), Mourad El-Kodsi, p. 150.
15. This was also the case in Egypt: “Sukkot provided a good opportunity for the children who had finished their Hebrew education to attend prayers in the sukkah and join with everyone in singing.”