



*Dedicated by Fred Birnbaum in honour of his wife Susan and their daughters Ricki, Sarah and Leora
Dedicated by Gila and Ilan Metz in memory of Ilan's grandmother Miriam bat Yitzchak HaLevi z"l
and Gila's grandmother Chava bat Yitzchak Natan z"l*

1. Prof. Erich and Rael Isaac, *A Goodly Tree: Sacred and Profane History*, Commentary Oct '58

Is the etrog just an excuse for the Jews to exercise their passion for the difficult, for the formal, and, above all, for argument? Such a view has been expressed before - in the 4th century, for example, Methodios Ebulios, a Christian bishop and subsequent martyr, wrote that it was both shameful and foolish for the Jews to make such an issue over a lemon.

2. Methodius, *How Each one Ought to Prepare Himself for the Future Resurrection*, Chapter 3

In the first day of the resurrection I am examined whether I bring these things which are commanded, whether I am adorned with virtuous works, whether I am overshadowed by the boughs of chastity. For account the resurrection to be the erection of the tabernacle... I take, therefore, on the first day the things which are set down, that is, on the day in which I stand to be judged, whether I have adorned my tabernacle with the things commanded... But come, let us consider what follows. "And ye shall take you," He says, "on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows (and the tree of chastity) of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your G-d." The Jews, uncircumcised in heart, think that the most beautiful fruit of wood is the citron wood, on account of its size... [I]f the citron appear beautiful to you, why not the pomegranate, and other fruits of trees, and amongst them apples, which much surpass the citron? Indeed, in the Song of Songs, Solomon having made mention of all these fruits, passes over in silence the citron only.

3. Rambam (12th century Egypt), *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings 11:3

ואל יעלה על דעתך שהמלך המשיח צריך לעשות אותות ומופתים ומחדש דברים בעולם או מחיה מתים וכיוצא בדברים אלו, אין הדבר כך, שהרי רבי עקיבא חכם גדול מחכמי משנה היה, והוא היה נושא כליו של בן כוזיבא המלך, והוא היה אומר עליו שהוא המלך המשיח, ודימה הוא וכל חכמי דורו שהוא המלך המשיח, עד שנהרג בעונות, כיון שנהרג נודע להם שאינו, ולא שאלו ממנו חכמים לא אות ולא מופת. Don't imagine that the king, Mashiach, must perform signs and wonders, or create new entities, or resuscitate the dead, or perform similar feats. It is not so, for Rabbi Akiva was one of the wise sages of the Mishnah, and he was an aide to Ben Koziva, the king, and he said that Ben Koziva was the king, Mashiach. He, and all of the sages of his generation, imagined that Ben Koziva was the king, Mashiach – until he was killed for his sins. Once he was killed, it was known to them that Ben Koziva was not it. The sages did not ask Ben Koziva for signs or wonders.

4. Dio Cassius, *Historia Romana LXIX 14*, Cray translation

Very few of them in fact survived. Fifty of their most important outposts and nine hundred and eighty-five of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Five hundred and eighty thousand men were slain in the various raids and battles, and the number of those who perished by famine, disease and fire was past finding out... Many Romans, moreover, perished in this war. Therefore Hadrian in writing to the senate did not employ the opening phrase commonly affected by the emperors, "If you and your children are in health, it is well; I and the legions are in health."

Etrog Evidence

5. Jerusalem Talmud, Maaser Sheni 1:1

מטבע שמרד כגון בן כוזיבא אינו מחלל.

The coin of a revolt, like that of Ben Koziva, may not be used for redemption [of the secondary tithe].

6. Prof. Rivka Ben-Sasson, *Botanics and Iconography Images of the Lulav and the Etrog*, *Ars Judaica* 2012

The Four Species of plants which are taken in hand during the Sukkot festival are represented in Jewish art from its very inception, for example: on the coins that were struck during the fourth year of the first revolt against the Romans (69–70 CE) (fig. 1). They appear again on the coins marking the first and fourth years of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt (132–36 CE) (fig. 2) and on clay oil lamps from the same period.

7. Mishnah Succah 3:4

רבי עקיבא אומר כשם שלולב אחד ואתרוג אחד כך הדס אחד וערבה אחת:

Rabbi Akiva said: Just as there is one palm branch and one etrog, so there is one myrtle and one willow.

8. Papyrus Yadin 57

שמעון ליהודה בר מנשה לקרית ערביה. שלחת לך תרי חמרין די תשלה עמהן תרי גברין לות יהונתן בר בעין ולות מסבלה די יעמרן וישלחן למחניה לותך ללבין ואתרגין. ואת שלח אחרנין מלותך וימטון לך הדסין וערבין. ותקן יתהן ושלח יתהן למחניה בדיל די אכלסה סגי. הוא שלם.

Simon to Yehudah son of Menasheh, to Kiryat Arabiya. I have sent you two donkeys, for you to send with them two men, to Yehonatan son of Be'ein and to Masabala, to load them and send them to the camp, to you, palm branches and citrons. And send others from you, and let them bring you myrtles and willow branches. And prepare them, and send them to the camp, because the masses are many. In peace.

9. Papyrus Yadin 52, tr. Hayim Lapin, *Palm Fronds and Citrons*, Hebrew Union College Annual 64 (1993)

Soumaios to Jonathan son of Baianos and to Masabala, greetings. Since I have sent Agrippa to you, hurry (and) send me wands and citrons. Provide(?) these for the camp of the Jews, and do not do otherwise. It (the letter) was written in Greek because of no means having been found to write it in Hebrew. Release him (Agrippa) quickly because of the festival, and do not do otherwise. Soumaios, greetings.

What did it mean to them?

10. Mishnah Succah 4:7

מיד התינוקות שומטין את לולביהן ואוכלין אתרוגיהן:

Immediately the children release their lulavim and eat their etrogim.

11. *Citrus fruits were the clear status symbols of the nobility in the ancient Mediterranean*,

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/08/170818092100.htm>

New research from Tel Aviv University reveals that citrons and lemons were clear status symbols for the ancient Roman ruling elite and plots the route and evolution of the citrus trade in the ancient Mediterranean... Until the first century CE, the only citrus produce available to the ancient Romans were the extremely rare and inordinately expensive citrons and lemons... [Dr. Langgut said,] "It appears that the citron was considered a valuable commodity due to its healing qualities, symbolic use, pleasant odor and rarity. Only the rich could have afforded it. Its spread therefore was helped more by its high social status, its significance in religion and its unique features, rather than its culinary qualities."

12. Talmud, Yevamot 72a

ר' יהודה אומר לא ימול מפני שסכנה היא לו אמרו לו והלא הרבה מלו בימי בן כוזיבא והולידו בנים ובנות

Rabbi Yehudah said: [One who has undergone a procedure to conceal circumcision] should not undergo a second circumcision, for it would be dangerous. They said to him: But many such people were circumcised in the time of Ben Koziva, and they produced sons and daughters!

13. Prof. Rivka Ben-Sasson, *Botanics and Iconography Images of the Lulav and the Etrog*, *Ars Judaica* 2012

[A]fter the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the Romans minted a coin to celebrate their victory bearing the inscription *Judaea Capta* where the symbol of Judea is a palm tree, under which sits a feminine figure guarded by a Roman soldier...

Returning to the relatively few depictions of the date palm in mosaics of the Land of Israel, I can make an assumption. In Jewish consciousness, the date palm represented Judea and its independence, as symbolized on the Roman coins of *Judaea Capta* struck in Rome from 70 to 80 CE, after the destruction of the Temple. On these coins Judea is represented by a palm tree, and the people by a mourning woman. Perhaps Bar-Kokhba's use of the same symbol to awaken the national feelings of the people of Judea, followed by the disastrous consequences of the uprising, led to the limitation in the use of this visual symbol.

14. Midrash Tehillim 17:5

ואמרי רבנן לולב בימין ואתרוג בשמאל. מה טעם? "נעימות בימיןך נצח", במי שהוא נוטל לולב בימין ונוצח ובאין. בנוהג שבעולם הנדייסין רצין באיפרכוס, מי נוטל ובא? מי שהוא נוצח.

And the Sages said: The lulav in the right and the etrog in the left [while circling the altar]. Why? "The pleasant items are in your right, for victory. (Tehillim 16:11)" This refers to the one who takes the lulav in the right and is victorious with the branches. Customarily, competitors race in the arena, and who takes the branches? The one who wins.

15. Plutarch, *Antony* 24:3, Perrin tr.

At any rate, when Antony made his entry into Ephesus, women arrayed like Bacchanals, and men and boys like Satyrs and Pans, led the way before him, and the city was full of ivy and thyrsus-wands and harps and pipes and flutes...

16. Melachim I 8:65

ויעש שלמה בעת ההיא את ההג וכל ישראל עמו קהל גדול מלבוא חמת עד נחל מצרים לפני ד' אלקינו שבעת ימים ושבעת ימים ארבעה עשר יום:

And at that time Shlomo performed the *chag*, all Israel with him, a great nation from the entrance to Chamat to the wadi of Egypt, before Hashem our Gd, seven days and seven days, fourteen days.

17. Ezra 3:3-4

ויכינו המזבח על מכונתיו כי באימה עליהם מעמי הארצות ויעלו עליו עלות לד' עלות לבקר ולערב: ויעשו את חג הסוכות פכתוב ועלת יום ביום במקפר כמשפט דבר יום ביומו:

And they prepared the altar on its foundations, for they feared the nations of the lands. And they brought upon it burnt offerings for Gd, burnt offerings for the morning and evening. And they performed the Succot festival, as recorded, and each day's burnt offering by number, according to the law, each day's [offerings] as appropriate.

18. Zechariah 14:16

והיה כל הנותר מכל הגוים הבאים על ירושלים ועלו מדי שנה בשנה להשתחוות למלך ד' צבקות ולחג את חג הסוכות: And all who remain from all of the nations who ascended against Jerusalem will ascend annually to bow to the King, the Lord of multitudes, and to celebrate the holiday of Succot.

19. Brian Burnstein, *The Causes of the Bar Kokhba Revolt*, Masters Thesis, University of British Columbia

In addition, the use of paleo-Hebrew on the revolt coinage displays a desire to be seen like the Maccabees and their revolt from Seleucid hegemony, perhaps in an attempt to see the same success they had against their overlords.