

## אֶזוֹב – Hyssop – *Hyssopus Officinalis*

### Hyssop – The Humble Herb of Freedom

During the month of Nissan – the month of our liberation – we emerge from all kinds of slavery. The humble hyssop that grows out of the hard bedrock symbolizes this redemption process. When the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, we were instructed to dip the hyssop in the blood of the Pesach sacrifice and sprinkle it on our doorposts as a sign for Hashem to pass over us during the first-born plague of the Egyptians:



**ספר שמות פרק יב פסוק כב** וּלְקַחְתֶּם אֶגְדֵּת אֶזוֹב וּטְבַלְתֶּם בְּדָם אֲשֶׁר בַּסֵּף וְהִגַּעְתֶּם אֶל הַמַּשְׁקוּף וְאֶל שְׁתֵּי הַמְּזוֹזוֹת מִן הַדָּם אֲשֶׁר בַּסֵּף וְאַתֶּם לֹא תֵצְאוּ אִישׁ מִפֶּתַח בֵּיתוֹ עַד בֹּקֶר:

“You shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the entrance of his house until the morning” (*Shemot* 12:22).

Perhaps hyssop was chosen to accompany us out of exile due to its humble nature- it reflects the rock-bottom level of the Israelites prior to the Exodus. The low maintenance hyssop grows all over Israel between rocks and terraces. It is a perennial shrub, tolerant to a wide range of weather and drought conditions, preferring white, grayish dirt. Its easy growth has drawn people to the hyssop herb since Biblical times. When the Torah described King Solomon’s wisdom, it used hyssop as an example of the lowest kind of plant that King Solomon’s knowledge encompassed.

**ספר מלכים א פרק ה פסוק יג** וַיְדַבֵּר עַל הָעֵצִים מִן הָאֶרֶז אֲשֶׁר בְּלִבָּנוֹן וְעַד הָאֶזוֹב אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא בְקִיר...

“He spoke of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that emerges from the wall...” (*Melachim* 5:13).

There was no way we could have taken ourselves out of the Egyptian slavery, where we were “bare and naked” (*Yechezkiel* 16:7). By teaching us total surrender to the power of the Almighty, the lowly hyssop propelled us up from our lowermost point to the greatest spiritual heights. The spirit of the humble hyssop helps us to internalize that there is still no way we can accomplish anything except through Hashem’s blessing. This attitude merits redemption because Hashem does kindness to the lowly and raises up the poor (*Tehillim* 113:7).

### Herb of Purification

“Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow” (*Tehillim* 51:7).

In the Torah, hyssop is used in [ritual purification from the spiritual sickness of tzara’at](#) (*Vayikra* chapter 14), and from the impurity of death (*Bamidbar* chapter 19). Due to its antimicrobial and anti-viral properties, hyssop is known for its cleansing effect through topical and internal preparations, as well as through inhalation. The stalks were burned and the smoke inhaled to clear the respiratory passages. Hyssop is one of the most ancient of ritual herbs. It has been used for millennia for cleansing and consecration. In the Middle Ages, the presence of hyssop was thought to repel plague and bring purity to the home. It was also used to repel insects. The Romans prepared an herbal wine containing hyssop. In ancient Greece, the physicians Galen and Hippocrates valued hyssop for inflammations of the throat and chest, such as pleurisy and other

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bronchial complaints. The herb is especially useful in helping the immune system to combat respiratory infections and colds. Hyssop, taken in warm infusions, acts as an expectorant and helps expel phlegm and break up congestion in the lungs. It is also a beneficial herb for treatment of the virus, *Herpes simplex*. An infusion may also be used to relieve the distress of asthma. Hyssop is a diaphoretic, and acts to promote perspiration. It will help to reduce fever and eliminate toxins through the skin. Hyssop also acts as a carminative and digestive aid, relieving flatulence and relaxing the digestive system. This versatile herb is also a nervine, which calms anxiety. It is possible that the Hebrew word for hyssop – עִזְוֹן/*Ezov* is connected to the root ע-ז-ו – leave, exchanging the *alef* with the *ayin*. To cleanse and purify is indeed to take leave of what we don't want. I find it fascinating that hyssop is used as a purifier both in the Torah and in folk medicine. In the Torah, for spiritual cleansing, to purify the impurity of the spiritual disease of tzara'at arising from arrogance, from the impurity of death and to purify Israel from the impure, necromantic Egypt. In folk medicine, hyssop is a cleansing herb that eliminates toxins and viruses.

### Hyssop Purges Negative Emotions and Helps Us Manifest Our Higher Self

In most traditions, hyssop is a cleansing herb that purifies and sanctifies spaces for rituals. It is more purifying than strictly protective. Dried hyssop may be infused in floor washes or scattered around the home. I hang a bunch in our home for the beneficial effect and great smell! Hyssop is used to clear away sins, regrets and worries that are blocking our spiritual progress. When we open our wild hearts to humble, rugged, ageless hyssop, it helps us to improve strength, stamina, energy, attitude, and outlook. It also generates compassion. Hyssop calms the internal struggle of conflicting realities, while increasing self-acceptance and the overcoming of unworthiness. It fortifies our resolve to walk our path, supports the courage needed to follow our heart's desire and builds endurance needed for self-discovery. Hyssop expands lung energy by releasing guilt. Add hyssop oil to water and spread the mixture in a room to uplift or transmute the dense thought forms vibrating in the space. Rubbing hyssop oil on the shoulders helps release tension caused by carrying emotional burdens. Hyssop oil used on the lung and large intestine meridians releases mucus congestion in the lung and bronchial tubes and purges grief held within the subtle body's energy. Hyssop facilitates the purging of old beliefs that no longer serve us and our spiritual growth. It clears the resonance of realities long outgrown and opens the energy to manifest our higher self (Based on Deborah Eidson, *Vibrational Healing: Revealing the Essence of Healing through Aromatherapy* p. 131).

### Hands On:

Harvest hyssop when the herb reaches its maximum height. Frequent cuttings from the tops of mature plants will keep the foliage tender for use in salads, soups, or teas. Used sparingly in culinary preparations, hyssop's tender shoots are a digestive aid, especially with greasy meats. When harvesting the herb for medicinal purposes, use the flowering tops. Gather the herb on a sunny, spring day after the dew has dried. Hang the branches to dry in a warm, airy room out of direct sunlight. Remove leaves and flowers from the stems and store in clearly labeled, tightly sealed, dark-glass containers.

### Hyssop Tea (Infusion)

Place 3 tablespoons of dried, or twice as much fresh, hyssop leaf and blossom in a warm glass container. Bring 2.5 cups of fresh, nonchlorinated water to the boiling point, and add it to the herbs. Cover and infuse the tea for 10 to 15 minutes. Strain and drink warm. The prepared tea will store for about two days if kept in a sealed container in the refrigerator. Hyssop tea may be enjoyed by the cupful up to three times a day. Combine hyssop with white horehound for

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additional expectorant action to relieve cough. For sore throats, a warm infusion of hyssop combined with sage (*Salvia officinalis*) is a home remedy recommended by herbalists.

### Hyssop Tincture

Combine four ounces of finely cut fresh or powdered dry herb with one pint of brandy, gin, or vodka, in a glass container. The alcohol should be enough to cover the plant parts. Place the mixture away from light for about two weeks, shaking several times each day. Strain and store in a tightly-capped, dark glass bottle. A standard dose is 1-2 ml of the tincture three times a day.

### Homemade Za'atar Mixture

1 cup fresh picked hyssop leaves  
 4 tablespoons sesame seed  
 ½ a teaspoon sumac  
 1 tsp sea salt

1. Pick hyssop leaves when young and fresh.
2. Dry hyssop leaves by hanging them upside down for a few days.
3. Remove the stalks and grind the hyssop leaves in a coffee grinder.
4. Mix with toasted sesame seeds and a little sea-salt.
5. Optionally add a little sumac spice)

Now you have your Za'atar ready to mix with olive oil and served as a dip for whole-wheat bread, grains and vegetables.

Link to other articles about hyssop <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.co.il/search?q=hyssop>