

PEPPER / פלפל שחור (Pilpel Shachor) / Pimienta negra

"Once weighed with silver in the marketplaces, its grains were a treasure among merchants, mixed into sauces to bring warmth and sharpness."

Scent Profile: Pungent, spicy, earthy

Medieval Context: Black pepper was one of the most valuable commodities in medieval spice trade networks, reaching Iberia through North African and Venetian merchants. Pepper was prized for its preservative qualities and culinary intensity.

Jewish pepper merchants in Catalonia and al-Andalus were key players in the spice trade. Pepper was used both for its warming qualities and for preserving meat and sauces. Rashba addresses issues of kosher trade concerning spices like pepper, saffron, and cinnamon.

Symbolic usage: Pepper was often associated with **sharpness**, even metaphorically in Talmudic language, "pilpul" (peppery reasoning), as a term for **sharp Talmudic debate**.

Maimonides (Rambam) in his *Mishneh Torah* (Hilchot De'ot 4:18):

"Spices such as black pepper, ginger, cinnamon... increase heat in the body and must be consumed with caution."

Primary Source Reference: Appears in medieval responsa involving spice trade disputes and taxation records involving Jewish merchants.