

SUKKOT

INTRODUCTION TO SUKKOT

Introduction to Sukkot

Sukkot means “huts.” The Jewish festival of Sukkot celebrates and commemorates the shelters in which the Israelites lived for 40 years after leaving Egypt.

Symbols

The main symbols associated with Sukkot are living in a sukka (eating and, when possible, sleeping in the sukka) and the lulav and etrog.

Sukkot is observed at fall harvest time. When many Jews were feeling wealthy due to their produce, we were commanded to live in temporary shelters--in part, to ward off feelings of arrogance or pride in what we had accomplished in the material world. Instead of thinking or feeling that our hard work or great wisdom has made us wealthy, we are reminded that whatever we have comes from God, and that God will take care of us, even in a flimsy “house.”

The lulav and etrog have many meanings. Here are two:

Likening to the Human Body

The four components are compared to four parts of the human body:

- Palm branch: Spine.
- Myrtle leaves: Human eyes.
- Willow leaves: Human lips.
- Eetrog: Human heart.

When we hold the four parts of the lulav/etrog together, we are symbolically taking the various components of our bodies together to serve God.

Likening to Types of Jews

The four components are likened to four types of Jews:

- Eetrog smells nice and tastes nice--like a tzadik who is knowledgeable in Torah and does mitzvot;
- Myrtle smells nice but does not have a good taste--like a person who does mitzvot but is not knowledgeable in Torah;
- Palm tree (date palm) has a nice tasting fruit but no scent--like someone who has knowledge but lacks mitzvot;
- Willow does not smell nice nor has a good taste--like a person who has neither.

By holding them together, we show that all types of Jews are to be considered as one nation.

SUKKOT: PRAYERS

SUKKOT: PRAYERS: WHAT TIME TO START

Sukkot: Prayers: What Time To Start: Ma'ariv and Kiddush

- Ma'ariv on both nights of Sukkot may be said from 1 1/4 hours before sunset.
- Kiddush in the sukka may not be said until after dark on both nights.

SUKKA

SUKKA: BEING INSIDE

Sukka: Being Inside: Requirements

There is no requirement to be in a sukka except when eating bread or mezonot, and possibly sleeping in the sukka, but there is some spiritual benefit from being in the sukka at other times.

SUKKA: EATING

Sukka: Eating: What To Eat

There is no requirement to eat any food other than mezonot or bread (and some opinions say also drinking wine) in a sukka. Eating other foods in a sukka is considered to be saintly behavior (midat chasidut).

Men: Eating Outside the Sukka

Bread: Men may not eat bread or a full meal outside the sukka during Sukkot.

Mezonot: Men may not eat more than 1.9 fl. oz. (56 ml) of mezonot (within four minutes) outside the sukka during Sukkot, but they may eat 1.8 fl. oz. or less, wait nine minutes, and then eat another quantity up to 1.8 fl. oz.

Women: Eating Outside the Sukka

Women and girls may eat bread or mezonot outside of a sukka. They do not need to eat any meals in the sukka, but if they do, it is a mitzva and they say leisheiv ba'sukka.

Sukka: Eating: Uncomfortable Weather

Except for first night of Sukkot (and also the second night outside of Eretz Yisrael), there is no need to be discomforted at all by rain, cold, or heat. You may eat even bread outside of the sukka without waiting to see if the conditions will become more comfortable. This includes on Shabbat.

SUKKA: BLESSINGS

Sukka: Blessings: When To Say

Do not say the blessing leisheiv ba'sukka except when you will eat bread or mezonot. Even drinking wine is not an exception, so do not say leisheiv ba'sukka even for haydala (unless you will also eat mezonot at the same time).

NOTE We do say leisheiv ba'sukka at kiddush, but that is in anticipation of eating bread at the meal to follow.

Sukkot: Blessings: SheHecheyanu

First Night: Say she'hecheyanu after saying leisheiv ba'sukka (in kiddush), since she'hecheyanu covers the sukka and the Jewish festival.

Second Night: Say she'hecheyanu before leisheiv ba'sukka (since it only covers the Jewish festival itself).

NOTE There is no blessing on building a sukka; it is covered by the she'hecheyanu in the kiddush.

Sukkot: When To Say Leisheiv BaSukka

When you sit down in a sukka, only say the blessing leisheiv ba'sukka:

- If you are going to eat at least 1.9 fl. oz. (56 ml, or about 1/4 - 1/5 cup) of bread or mezonot within four minutes, OR
- Immediately after saying kiddush and before drinking the wine in anticipation of eating mezonot or bread, OR

- Before eating any food or beverage (except salt or water) when visiting any other person in his/her sukka.

Sukkot: Blessings: Forgetting Leisheiv BaSukka

If you washed hands, said ha'motzi, and ate some bread in a sukka but forgot to say the blessing leisheiv ba' sukka, you may still say that blessing until you have finished your meal; but you should eat at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) more of bread (within 4 minutes) after saying leisheiv ba'sukka.

Birkat HaMazon If You Ate Sukka Meals Indoors

If you ate your meal inside the house on Sukkot, you do not need to go to the sukka to say birkat ha'mazon.

SUKKA: SLEEPING

Sukkot: Sleeping at Someone Else's House

If you sleep at another person's house or sukka during Sukkot, you should consider their sukka as being yours. You do not say the blessing leisheiv ba'sukka except if you eat bread or mezonot there.

SUKKA: BUILDING

SUKKA: BUILDING OR FIXING

Building or Fixing a Sukka on Sukkot

A Jew may fix or build a sukka on chol ha'moed.

A non-Jew may fix or build a sukka on chol ha'moed or even on the Jewish festival days. A Jew may explicitly tell the non-Jew how to accomplish the repairs or the building of the sukka.

SUKKA: SHAPES

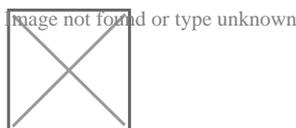
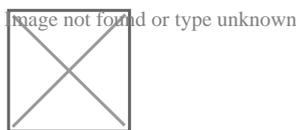
Permitted Sukka Shapes

A sukka may have many sides and may even be circular, but it may not have a pointed top (shaped like a teepee).

SUKKA: DIMENSIONS

Sukka: Dimensions: Minimum/Maximum

- A sukka must have at least three walls, but one of those walls may be as little as 1 tefach wide.
- A round sukka must extend to at least 270 degrees.
- Sukka height: More than 10 tefachim (40" or 1 m) high and less than 20 amot (33'4" or 10 m) tall.
- Minimum sukka width: 7 tefachim x 7 tefachim (28" x 28" or 71.1 cm x 71.1 cm).
- Maximum wall-to-ground gap for sukka: walls must be within 3 tefachim, or 10 ½" (27 cm) of the ground.
- Maximum permissible angle (slope) of a roof on a sukka is less than 45 degrees from horizontal.
- Schach: Must cover the sukka so that there is more shade than sun when the sun is directly overhead and must have at least enough space between the schach elements for rain to penetrate.



SUKKA: WALLS

Sukka: Walls: Tree Trunk

You may use the trunk of a tree as part of a sukka, but consult a rabbi about the spacing and curvature of the roots.

Sukka: Walls: Flapping

The walls of a sukka must be able to withstand wind without flapping up from the bottom to more than 10.5 inches above the ground.

Sukka: Walls: Bracing

The sukka does not need to be freestanding. When setting up a sukka, you may brace the walls with rope, boards, against tree or house... in any way you wish. You may not brace or attach supports to the walls on the festival but you may directly ask a non-Jew to do that work for you.

SUKKA: SCHACH

Sukka: Schach: Timing

Sukka: Schach: Timing: Within 30 Days

You must put schach on your sukka within 30 days of Sukkot. If you are using a porch that has slats year round as a roof for your sukka, you must lift up and put back the slats within 30 days of Sukkot.

Sukka: Schach: Materials

Non-Kli

You may not use a kli for sukka schach.

A kli is any item created with the intention of being used as a tool or utensil to make an activity easier.

EXAMPLES

- Bamboo if it had been used for any other purpose.
- Wooden ladder.
- Walking stick.

Non-Edible

A sukka's covering (schach) must consist of non-edible branches, leaves, or other materials of plant origin such as boards. You may use wooden boards (such as 2" x 4"s) to hold up schach, even though lumber is intended to be used for construction.

Size

Boards or tree trunks—whether used as schach or used to hold up schach--must be not more than 15 inches (38 cm) wide. A board--whether used as schach or used to hold up schach--more than 15 inches wide invalidates the area below it and you would have to sit under kosher schach in order to fulfill the mitzva. In the case of a board more than 15 inches wide: If the sukka has only three walls, the board may invalidate the sukka. Consult a rabbi.

Fresh

You may not use branches whose leaves will dry up in less than 8 days, intending to replace the branches with fresh ones during chol ha'moed; the custom is to use evergreen leaves only if you want to use leaves as schach.

Fasteners

Schach on the sukka must stay by itself without fasteners or connectors, even in a place with normally high wind. Any man-made fasteners--such as plastic, metal, or even hemp cord or rope--will invalidate the schach. If the schach will stay without them, then you may use fasteners or connectors as reinforcements.

Year-Round Structures

You may use a pergola, gazebo, or other type of awning frame or roof structure that exists year-round for a sukka as long as the other conditions (size, slope, materials, timing, etc.) are kosher. You must first remove any permanent roof coverings before putting on the schach.

NOTE The slope of the sukka roof must be less than 45 degrees from horizontal.

Sukka: Schach: Gap

Sukka: Schach: Gap: What Invalidates

A gap in schach of 10.5 inches by 10.5 inches or larger will not invalidate the entire sukka, but you may not sit under that part of the sukka when eating or saying the blessing leishev ba'sukka. A gap of more than 14 inches wide may invalidate the sukka.

Sukka: Schach: Normal Wind (Ru'ach Metzuya)

Ru'ach metzuya is defined as a normal wind for each location and season (this is relevant for schach on Sukkot).

SUKKA: OVERHANGS

Sukka: Overhangs: Vines/Trees

Vines or tree branches that overhang even a small part of a sukka may make it not kosher. A tree that overhangs a large part of the sukka invalidates the portion below the tree and may invalidate an entire side or even more. Consult a rabbi.

Sukka: Overhangs: Wood Structures

You may not normally use a sukka that has any wood structure such as a pergola/gazebo above the schach, but there are exceptions: ask a rabbi.

Sukka: Overhangs: Balconies

A sukka built under a balcony, even if the balcony is many stories above the sukka, is not kosher.

SITUATION

Only part of a sukka is under the balcony.

STATUS

To be kosher, the sukka must have a footprint at least 7 by 7 tefachim and must have at least three walls that are not under the balcony.

NOTE If you have only two walls with the overhanging balcony, consult a rabbi.

Sukka: Overhangs: Women and Children

Women and children of either gender may sit under an invalidated part of the sukka since they are not required to sit in the sukka at all. However, if they wish to say the blessing leishev baSukka, they must sit under a valid part of the sukka while they say the blessing. They must also eat at least 1.9 fl. oz. of bread or mezonot while under the valid part.

SUKKA: CAR

How To Make a Car into a Sukka

To make a car into a sukka:

- Open two doors on the same side of the car and put schach on top/across the doors.
- Make sure the doors reach to within 10 ½ inches (26.7 cm) of the ground or curb (so you might need to park at a curb).
- Make sure the schach over the doors is at least 40 inches (1 m) above the curb.

SUKKA: INTIMACY

Sukka: Intimacy

Intercourse is permitted in a sukka.

SUKKA: LEAVING

SUKKA: LEAVING: FIRST NIGHT

Sukka: Leaving: First Night: Rain

Rain on the first night of Sukkot is only considered a bad omen in Eretz Yisrael.

REASON It does not normally rain there at that time of year.

Sukka: Leaving: First Night: Rain, Cold, Bees

You may leave the sukka due to extreme cold or heat, rain, or bees. **You should not stay in a sukka if it is raining or very cold or will otherwise make people suffer.**

If it is raining on the first night of Sukkot and the rain is sporadic, wait until midnight before saying kiddush indoors.

If it is raining on the first night of Sukkot and the forecast predicts rain all evening, you do not need to wait to see if the rain will stop before saying kiddush. Instead:

- Say kiddush in the sukka (without saying leisheiv ba'sukka), even in the rain.
- Wash hands and say ha'motzi.
- Eat at least 1.3 fl. oz. (39 ml, or 1/6 cup) of bread in the sukka.
- Go inside the house and finish your meal inside.

NOTE You do not need to say birkat ha'mazon in the sukka. If the rain stops, go back outside, say leisheiv, eat at least 1.9 fl. oz. (56 ml) more of bread in the sukka, and finish your meal in the sukka.

SUKKA: SHMINI ATZERET

Sukka: Shmini Atzeret

Outside Eretz Yisrael, you should eat your meals in the sukka on Shmini Atzeret, but do not make a blessing on the sukka.

FOUR SPECIES: LULAV AND ETROG

LULAV: BEAUTY

Lulav: If First Day of Sukkot Is Shabbat

You do not need to buy a fancy or expensive lulav and etrog if the first day of Sukkot is Shabbat, since the Torah requirement for the etrog to be beautiful is only on the first day of Sukkot.

LULAV: SIZES

Palm Branch Sizes

Minimum length for lulav (palm branch): Spine must be at least 16" long, not including the length of the leaves. At least 4" of the spine of the lulav must be above the tops of the willows and myrtles.

Myrtle and Willow Branch Sizes

Each of the myrtle and willow branches must be at least 12 inches long.

LULAV: CHOOSING

Lulav: Choosing: Condition

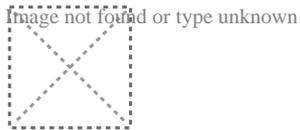
A lulav, willow branches, or myrtle branches are only disqualified/pasul if the leaves are so dry that they will crack if you bend them. Being moldy does not disqualify them.

LULAV: SETTING UP

To Set Up a Lulav

To set up a lulav: hold with spine facing you, with three myrtle branches (hadassim) on the right and two willow branches (aravot) on the left. It is customary to put the myrtle and willow branches into a holder made of palm leaves.

NOTE Before Sukkot begins, open any sealed plastic bags that contain the willow and myrtle branches, as you may not cut them open on the festival days (the first and second days outside of Eretz Yisrael).



LULAV: BORROWING

Lulav: When You May Borrow

You may borrow a lulav on all days of Sukkot except the first day (or first two days outside of Eretz Yisrael). On the first (two) day(s), you may acquire a lulav and etrog by having a friend “give” them to you as a gift, even if you will later “give” them back to your friend, also as a gift.

NOTE If you intended to use someone else's lulav on the first day of Sukkot, it is considered as if the lulav is yours, even without doing the normal acquisition.

Lulav: Husband and Wife

A man's wife does not own the lulav with him (and a wife's husband does not own her lulav), but it is assumed that each gives their lulav to the other (on the first and second day of Sukkot) as a gift with a condition that the recipient will give the lulav back to the other spouse as a gift once finished.

LULAV: HOW TO BLESS

LULAV: WHO SHOULD BLESS

Lulav: Who Should Bless: Women

Women and girls do not need to bless over or wave the lulav; but if they do, it is a mitzva.

LULAV: WHERE TO BLESS

Lulav: Where To Bless: Sukka or Synagogue

Say blessings on the lulav and etrog in the sukka or in synagogue.

LULAV: WHEN TO BLESS

Lulav: When To Bless: Daytime

Only say the blessing on the lulav during the day.

Lulav: Shabbat

Don't pick up the lulav or say the blessing on Shabbat.

LULAV: HOLD, BLESS, SHAKE

Lulav: Hold, Bless, Shake

To fulfill the commandment of lulav and etrog, you must hold them together the way they grow: stems down. But since you fulfill the commandment as soon as you hold the Four Species together this way, you must first pick up the etrog inverted (stem up) and then say the blessing, as follows:

- Hold the lulav with the spine facing you and the myrtle on the right, willows on the left, and the etrog with the pitom (opposite the stem) down;
- Say the blessings for the lulav;
- Turn the etrog right side up (stem-side down) and hold the lulav and etrog together; and
- Shake the Four Species together.

NOTE Waving (or shaking) the lulav is a universally accepted custom with the force of halacha. We show that God is present in all directions by waving the lulav in the four compass directions, plus up and down. There are various customs of the sequence in which to wave the lulav. One common sequence is east; south; west; north; up; down. Wave the Four Species three times in each direction.

NOTE Although the lulav's spine should face you as you hold it, you have still fulfilled the requirement of lulav if the spine was facing away or if the willows and myrtles are on the incorrect sides of the lulav.

Lulav: Hallel at Home or in Synagogue

Ideally, take your lulav and etrog to synagogue and say hallel with the minyan. B'di'avad, it is OK to say hallel and the blessings and wave the lulav at home.

Lulav: How To Wave During Hallel

Wave the lulav in all six directions each time when saying Hodu l'Adonai... and, later, Ana Adonai... and again in the final Hodu in Hallel:

- Hold together the lulav and etrog during the entire procedure, pitom up, etrog in left hand.
- At each word in Hodu l'Adonai... and at each syllable in Ana Adonai, shake the lulav/etrog together three times, advancing through the sequence of east, south, west, north, up, down.

For Hodu l'Adonai:

- At Hodu, shake three times to the east;
- At l'Adonai, don't shake but hold the lulav and etrog up while standing straight;
- At ki, shake three times to the south, etc..

For Ana Adonai,

- At "A," shake three times to the east;
- At "na, shake three times to the south;
- At Adonai, stand straight and hold the lulav and etrog up;
- At "ho," shake three times to the west;
- At "shi," shake three times to the north, etc.

LULAV: STORING

Lulav: Storing: Replacing into Water

You may put the myrtle and willow branches into water after using them only if they were in water before the Sukkot holiday began. You may not add water on Shabbat, but you may on the other Jewish festival days. You may change the water only on chol ha'moed.

LULAV: DISPOSING

Lulav: Disposing

You may dispose of a lulav in any way that is not degrading. So, you may drop it into a field or put it on a lawn--unless animals might eat it or step on it or if it will be subject to poor treatment before it decays. Don't dispose of a lulav or etrog directly into the garbage. Burn, bury, or wrap them in a bag or one layer of plastic and you may throw it into normal garbage.

HOSHANOT

Hoshanot: Joining

Hoshanot were done in the Temple in Jerusalem and the community is required to do hoshanot. Individuals are not required to join, but it is the proper practice to join if holding a lulav and etrog.