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.
- *Etrog:* 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:

- *Etrog* 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 consider 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 *havdala* (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

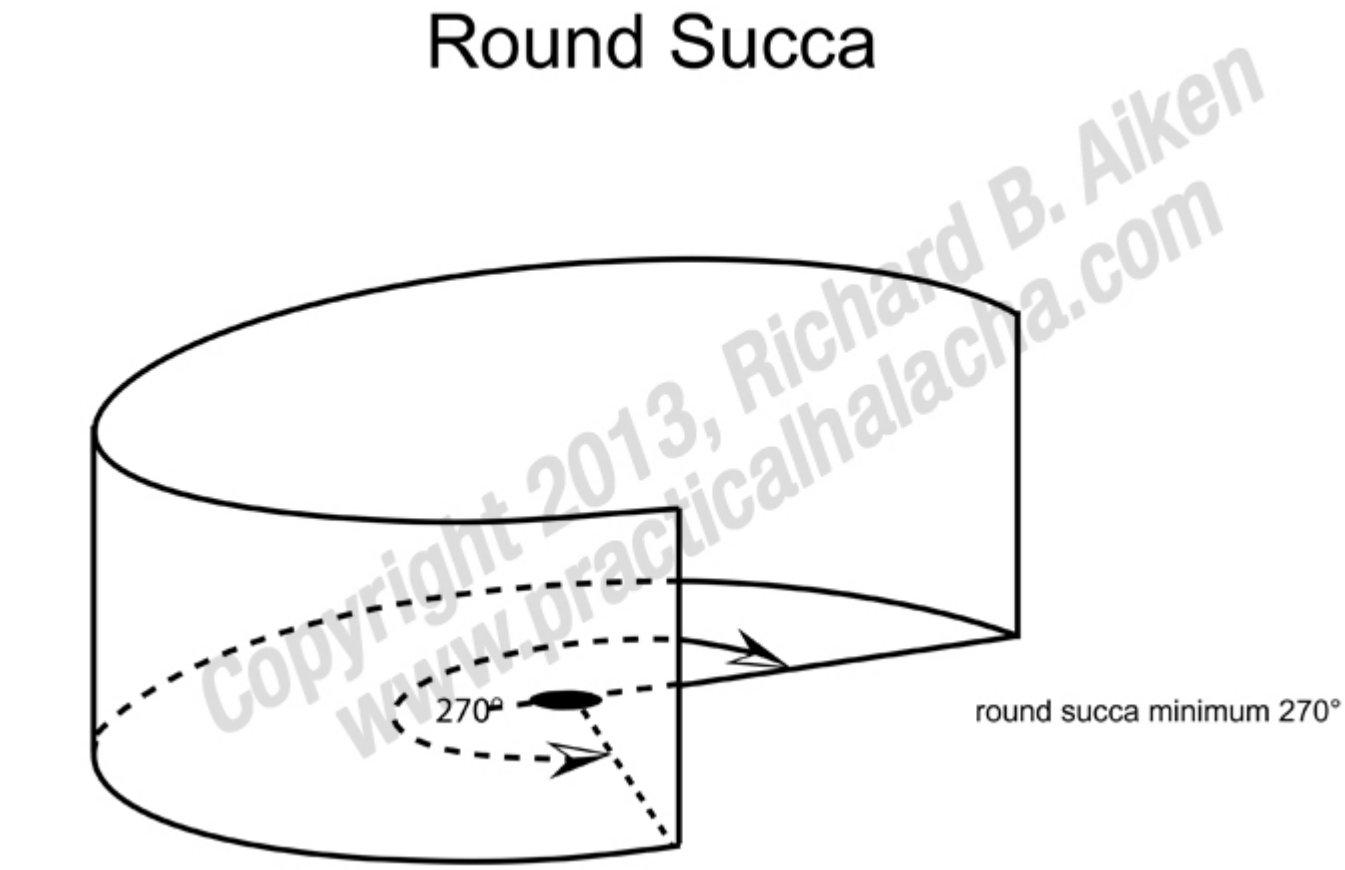
Permitted Sukka Shapes

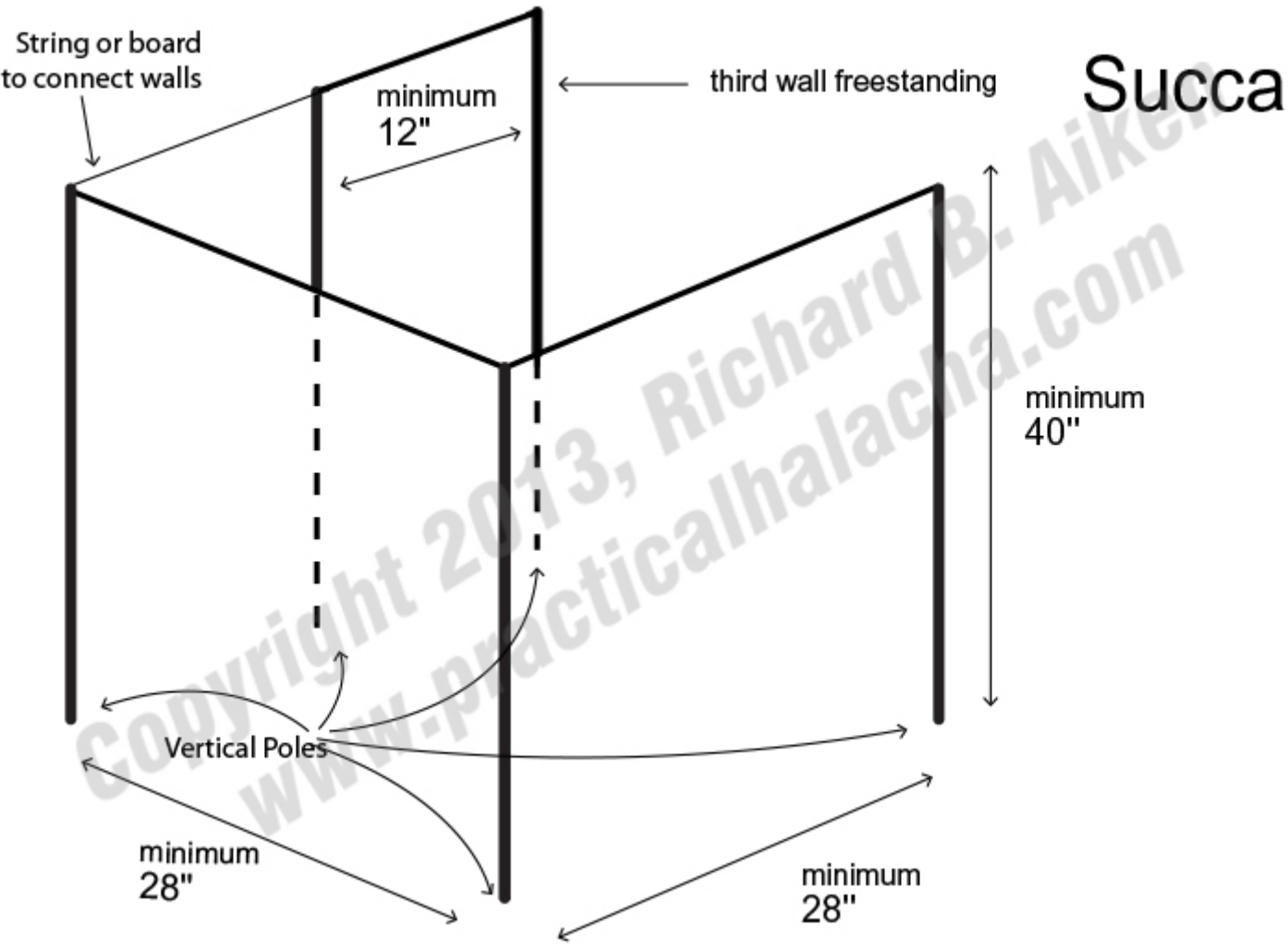
A *sukka* may have many sides and may even be circular, but it may not have a pointed top (shaped like a teepee).

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.
- S*ukka* 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.





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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 *leisheiv 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 leisheiv 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

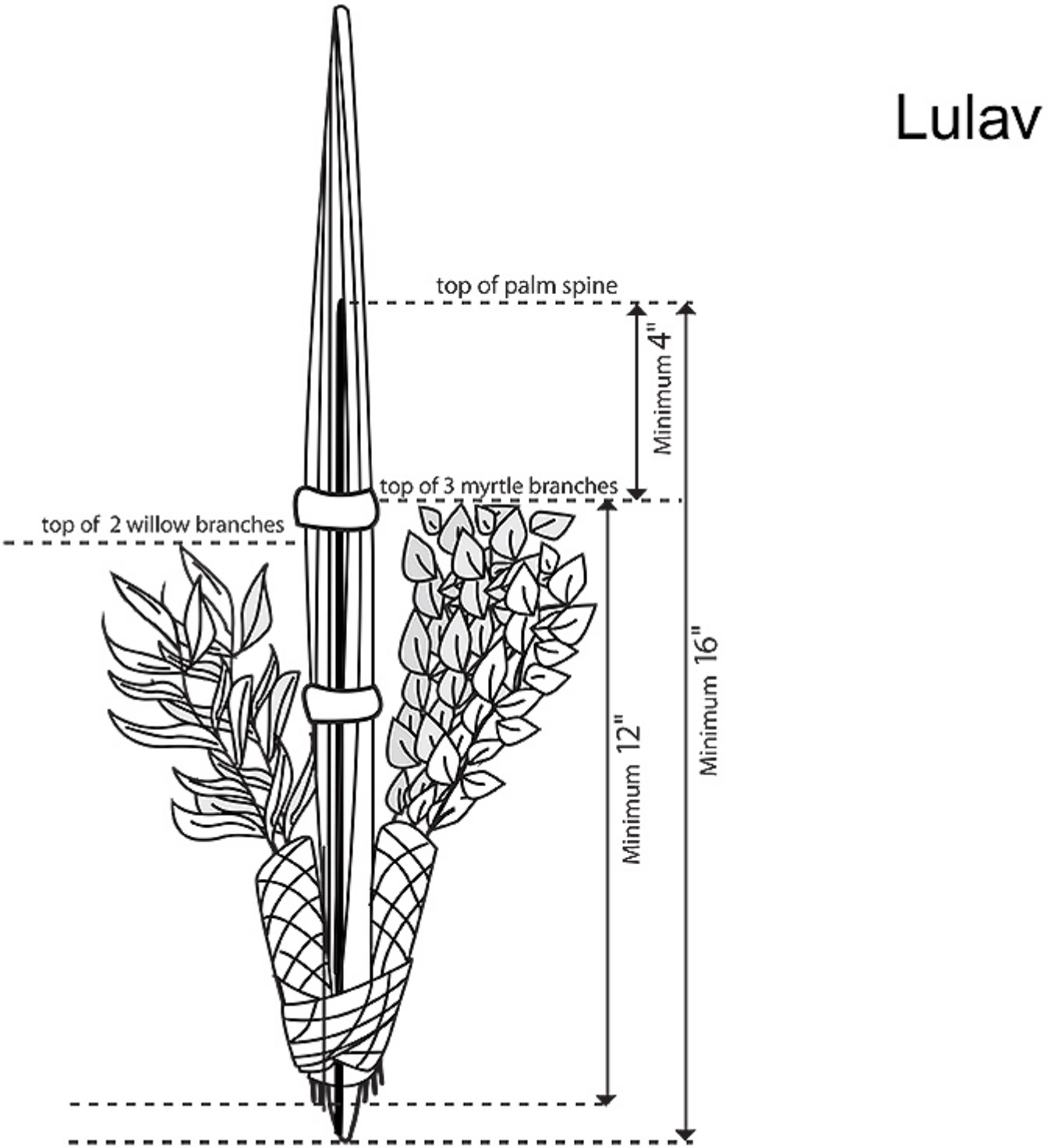
A *lulav*, willow branches, or myrtle branches are only disqualified/*pasul* if the leaves are so dry that they will crack if you bend them. Being moldy does not disqualify them.

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*.

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