



Laws and Customs for Sukkot 5784-2023

Right after the high of Yom Kippur we begin to devote our energy to the construction of a *sukkah* (temporary hut). We construct this dwelling which becomes a home for the week of Sukkot, and try our utmost to do our basic daily activities – eating, working, studying, social time, and sleeping – in the *sukkah*. This is in fulfillment of the Biblical commandment: “In *sukkot* you shall dwell for seven days; every citizen of Israel shall dwell in *sukkot*” (Lev. 23:42)¹. In addition to the *sukkah* being a comfortable place like a home for the week, it is also a sacred place; we should treat it as such and strive to be our best selves under its sheltering canopy.

It is our custom to read the Book of *Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes) on Shabbat Chol Hamoed Sukkot².

For laws and customs relating to building a *sukkah* please click [here](#).

Eating in the Sukkah

1) What kind of foods must be eaten in the *sukkah*?

- While there are many people who are careful to eat all their meals in a *sukkah*, the type of foods that have the strictest obligation to eat in a *sukkah* are those which have the blessings as depicted below.
 - *Borei Pri HaGafen*: on wine or grape juice
 - *HaMotzi*: on bread, pita or challah made of the five main grains
 - *Mezonot*: pasta, crackers, cookies and cakes made of the five main grains.
- Before eating from these foods, one is required to recite the blessing *Leisheiv BaSukkah*:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לֵישֵׁב בַּסֻּכָּה

“Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to dwell in the *sukkah*³.”

- The first time that we recite this Bracha, we add the *shehechyanu* blessing, which marks our joy in performing this mitzvah for the first time on Sukkot this year. This is typically fulfilled by the *shehechyanu* in kiddush on the first night, when we say the *shehechyanu* blessing immediately after *Leisheiv Basukkah*.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

“Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has granted us life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this occasion.

- When eating foods with the following blessings, one is technically exempt from eating in a *sukkah*:
 - *Ha'etz*: fruits
 - *Ha'adamah*: vegetables, legumes, quinoa, rice cakes (according to some)
 - *Shehakol*: most drinks, eggs, dairy products, fish, chicken, meat.

¹ As dwelling in the *sukkah* is a “time bound mitzvah” (מצוות עשה שהזמן גרמא), women are **not Biblically obligated** to perform this mitzvah.

² This year, as there is no Shabbat Chol HaMoed, we read *Kohelet* on *Shemini Atzeret* (Shabbat)

³ As men and women have different levels of obligation to eat in the *Sukkah*, a man may recite this blessing for men and women, while a woman may recite for herself and other women.



2) Exemptions from eating in the Sukkah:

- ❑ **Rain:** If it rains and the rain comes into the *sukkah*, as soon as it is steady (the kind that would drip onto and ruin a cooked dish), one is exempt from the requirement to be in the *sukkah* and should go inside. If rain interrupted a meal and one had to move inside, there is no obligation to interrupt the same meal again to go back to the *sukkah* if the rain stops. If one is sleeping out, any amount of rain generates the exemption from the *sukkah*, and one should go inside. The Sages say that anyone who eats in the *sukkah* in the rain is considered to be a fool and gleans no reward⁴.
- ❑ **First Night, Friday night, 9/29:** There is a caveat to the rain exemption on the **first** night of Sukkot where the obligation to eat in the *sukkah* is different. On all days and nights of Sukkot, there is an obligation that if one eats, one should eat in a *sukkah*. However, on the **first** night of Sukkot there is a **Biblical positive obligation** to eat some sort of bread in the *sukkah* which constitutes a *se'udah* (meal). **Many authorities⁵ apply this obligation even in the rain.** Therefore, even if it is raining heavily, one should wait a little while to see if the rain subsides. However, it should not be so long that it disrupts the joy of the holiday. If the rain does not abate, one should make *Kiddush* in the *sukkah*, not recite the blessing of *Leishev Basukkah*, make the blessing on bread (*hamotzie*), eat a piece of bread, and finish the meal inside. If the rain stops, one should move back out to the *sukkah* to finish the meal (if possible), say the blessing *Leishev Basukkah*, and recite the *bentching* (Grace After Meals).
- ❑ **Physical Discomfort:** One who is uncomfortable eating in the *sukkah* because of sickness, frailty or some other physical or psychological sensitivity is exempt from being in the *sukkah*, provided that moving inside would alleviate the discomfort. However, it is preferable not to apply this exemption on the first night.
- ❑ **Someone** who is engaged in traveling or in the performance of another mitzvah may be exempt from eating in the *sukkah*. Please consult a member of the rabbinic team for clarification.

3) Do we eat in the *sukkah* on *Shemini Atzeret*?

In Israel, after the end of the seven days of Sukkot, we no longer eat or sleep in the *sukkah*. The eighth day of Sukkot, also known as *Shemini Atzeret*, has a **dual** identity outside of Israel.

On one hand, it is considered an extra day of Sukkot, while on the other hand, it is a brand-new holiday. There are four prevalent customs about eating in a *sukkah* on *Shemini Atzeret*:

- Eat meals in the *sukkah*, without reciting the blessing of *Leishev BaSukkah*
- Make kiddush in the *sukkah*, then finish the meal inside (no *Leishev BaSukkah*)
- Eat only outside the *sukkah*
- Eat in the *sukkah* but do not sleep there (if sleeping was your custom on Sukkot)

⁴ Shulchan Aruch | Orach Chayim 639:7

⁵ The RoSh and the Rema hold this position, but not Ramban, Tosafot, Rashba, or the GRA



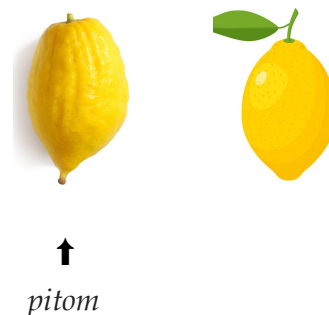
The Four Species: *Arba Minim*

- There is a Biblical mitzvah⁶ to hold and wave a set of particular Four Species while holding them together in your hands. These species are: one *lulav* (palm frond), one *etrog* (citron), three *hadassim* (myrtle leaves), two *aravot* (willow leaves). These are often collectively referred to as *lulav and etrog*.
- The mitzvah of *arba minim* must be performed holding all of the species together and during daylight hours. We do not wave the *arba minim* on Shabbat. This year the first day of Sukkot is Shabbat⁷, therefore we wave the *arba minim* for the first time on Sunday, September 17.
- There are two varieties of the *etrog*: one with a *pitom* and one without a *pitom*. For those with a *pitom*, if it breaks off, the *etrog* becomes invalid to use for the mitzvah on the first day.
- While shaking the *arba minim*, the *pitom* should be pointed **upwards**. If there is no *pitom*, the *etrog* should be held with the non-stem side facing up.
 - Before reciting the blessing(s), the direction is flipped.
- Here are the steps for fulfilling the mitzvah of *arba minim*:
 - Before reciting the blessing, the *etrog* is held upside down in the left hand (with the *pitom* facing down and the stem facing up). The *lulav*, *hadassim* and *aravot* are held in the right hand, with the stems down.
 - The blessing is recited:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת לֻלָּב

“Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us regarding taking the *lulav*.”

 - On the first day that one makes the blessing on the *arba minim*, a *shehechyanu* blessing is recited as well.
 - The *etrog* is then turned to the upright position (with *pitom* or non-stem side up). One then shakes the *arba minim* together (see below).



⁶ As waving the *arba minim* is a “time bound mitzvah” (מצוות עשה שהזמן גרמא), women are **not Biblically obligated** to perform this mitzvah. However, a woman may choose to **fulfill** this mitzvah, and may recite the blessing(s).

⁷ As the mitzvah of *arba minim* is Biblically obligated only on the first day of Sukkot, and Rabbinically obligated on the other days, this year, we only fulfill this mitzvah *medirabanan* - Rabbinically.



- The predominant Ashkenazi practice for shaking the *lulav* is as follows: one faces east and moves the four species back and forth three times, preferably while shaking the leaves. One then repeats this (in a clockwise direction) shaking three times towards the south, west, north, up and down⁸.
- **Hallel:** An individual reciting Hallel at home shakes the *lulav* at (first) *Hodu* one time, at *Yomar Na Yisrael* one time, then two times at *Ana Hashem Hoshiah Na* and then two times at the ending *Hodu*. The leader in shul does that as well. The congregants shake their *lulavim* each time they respond with *Hodu* (four times) and *Ana Hashem* (twice), and then two times at the ending *Hodu*.
- **Hoshanot:** Every day on Sukkot the community makes a circle around the shul with a Sefer Torah at the center and recites special *Hoshanot* prayers. This is typically done at the end of the Tefillah. Generally a mourner who does not join the circle (as it is considered celebratory) holds the Sefer Torah in the middle of the circle. The *arba minim* are held during *Hoshanot*. On *Hoshanah Rabbah* (7th day), the *kahal* (congregation) circles the shul seven times.
- For left-handed people, the *lulav* is held in the left hand; the *etrog* in the right hand.

Shemini Atzeret (Shabbat 10/7) and Simchat Torah (Sunday 10/8)

The last two days of the Sukkot holiday are actually a new holiday and (outside of Israel) each has its own name: *Shemini Atzeret* is the Biblical name of the holiday which is identified with the prayer for rain and reciting of the *Yizkor* prayer. Our Sages added another component, finishing the yearly cycle of reading the Torah and starting back at the beginning.

Simchat Torah depicts the joy that we feel as we celebrate our most precious gift from God: the Torah. *Simchat Torah* is celebrated with joyous circle dancing with all of our Torah scrolls and formal reading of the end of the Torah and then the very beginning.

➤ As this is a new holiday, the *shehechiyanu* blessing is recited for kiddush & candle-lighting.

Sukkot I | 9/29

6:23pm: Candle lighting (Friday)

Sukkot II | 9/30-10/1

7:25pm: Candle lighting (after Shabbat)⁹

7:23pm: End of Chag (Sunday)

Shemini Atzeret | 10/6

6:12pm: Candle lighting (Friday)

Simchat Torah | 10/7-8

7:13pm: Candle lighting¹⁰ (after Shabbat)

7:12pm: End of Chag (Sunday)

⁸ "Around the world" then up and down

⁹ **Saturday night (Sukkot II & Simchat Torah):** Candles are lit from an **existing** flame with the Yom Tov blessing only on the second night, Yom Tov Kiddush is recited; Havdalah insertions are added as we transition from Yom Tov|Shabbat to Yom Tov only. This follows the acronym *yaknaha*"z and includes blessings on spices and fire.

¹⁰ See Footnote 9 above