



TEMPLE CHAI

# Sukkot

Questions and Answers to  
help you more fully experience  
and enjoy this holiday.



## What does the word Sukkot mean?

The word Sukkot means *booths* or *tabernacle*, and refers to the temporary dwelling in which we are commanded to live during this holiday. The name of the holiday is frequently translated as The Feast of Tabernacles. It is also one of the Three Pilgrimage Festivals (the other two are Passover and Shavuot).

## How do you pronounce Sukkot?

The Hebrew pronunciation is *sue-coat*, the Yiddish pronunciation *sook-us* (rhymes with book us). Either pronunciation is acceptable!

## Why do we celebrate Sukkot?

Sukkot is celebrated for seven days as both an agricultural festival and an historic reminder of the years that the Israelites wandered in the wilderness of Sinai. Sukkot is a reminder that we should not become excessively attached to material wealth and fame. It is a time to reconnect with the natural state of the world.

### Why is Sukkot considered an agricultural/harvest festival?

Autumn was a time when the crops were gathered, so Sukkot became a double celebration. We were grateful that we were no longer wanderers in the desert, and we offered thanks to God for the gathering of the crops.

## What is a Sukkah?

The Sukkah is a temporary structure erected for use during the festival of Sukkot. It is a temporary dwelling large enough for a family to eat and live in. In Leviticus 23:42-43 we are taught, "You shall live in booths seven days in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." The sukkah symbolizes the booths or tents in which the Jewish people lived during their forty years of wandering. It has three "walls" and a top. The walls are normally made of wood or canvas and the whole structure is covered by sechach, a covering that must be made of material that grows in the ground and has been detached from it. Usually separate twigs, palm fronds, bamboo sticks, or the like are used so that the stars may shine through. The Sukkah is decorated with apples, pomegranates, clusters of grapes, Indian corn, gourds, flowers, decorations made by children about nature and harvesting, etc...

## When does Sukkot fall?

The Festival of Sukkot begins on the eve of the 15<sup>th</sup> day of *Tishri*, just five days after Yom Kippur, and lasts for seven days.

### What do you do in a Sukkah?

Some Jews take the words in Leviticus 23, "You shall live in booths..." literally! They eat and sleep in the sukkah. Many just eat their meals in the sukkah. There is also a custom called *ushpizin*, the welcoming of guests into the sukkah. Each and every meal can be an opportunity to invite people into the sukkah for a meal. Traditionally, all food eaten during Sukkot should be eaten inside the sukkah.

## What are the etrog and lulav?

The etrog is a citrus fruit that Leviticus 23:40, "And you shall take on the first day (of the holiday) the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, (myrtle branches), and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before your God seven days." During certain prayers on Sukkot, we wave the lulav and etrog together, up and down, left and right, to symbolize that God is the true owner of the world, and that we are indebted to God for providing us with our material wealth.

## Are there any special prayers that are said?

Every time we eat in the Sukkah, we say the following blessing:

**Baruch ata Adonai Elohainu Melech ha-olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu leysheyv basukkah."**

*Blessed are You the Eternal One who commands us to sit in the sukkah.*

The first time that we eat in the Sukkah each year, we say this additional blessing:

**Baruch ata Adonai Elohainu Melech ha-olam shehechyanu v'kiymanu v'higyanu laz-man ha-zeh.**

*Blessed are You the Eternal One who has created us, sustained us, and allowed us to reach this season.*

This blessing thanks God for sustaining our lives and enabling us to reach special times. We say this blessing at special times, such as weddings, B'nai Mitzvah, and holidays like Sukkot.

## How do I shake a lulav and etrog?

We shake the lulav and etrog every day except for Shabbat. The blessing over the lulav must be said during the day. The lulav is held in the right hand and the blessing is:

**Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al netilat lulav.**

*Blessed are You the Eternal One who commands us to wave the lulav.*

The *first* time we shake the lulav and the etrog, we also say the *Shechiyanu* (see previous prayer for eating in the Sukkah for the first time).

The etrog is then picked up with the left hand, (the lulav is already in the right). They are brought together and touched to the heart. The four should then be waved together in all directions three times: three times to the right, three times to the left, forward, up, down, and to the back. After each direction, touch the etrog and the lulav back to the heart.

This brochure was created by Temple Chai clergy and congregants  
under the loving guidance of Toni Dusik.

## Temple Chai

- A Caring Community -

Rabbi Mari Chernow - Senior Rabbi  
Rabbi Bonnie Koppell  
Rabbi Emeritus William C. Berk  
Cantor Emerita Sharona Feller

4645 E. Marilyn Road  
Phoenix, Arizona 85032

If you would like information about Temple Chai  
please contact us at 602-971-1234 or [templechai@templechai.com](mailto:templechai@templechai.com)  
or visit us at [www.templechai.com](http://www.templechai.com).