

Sukkot

The holiday of Sukkot gives us the opportunity to return to nature.

Throughout the year we live in permanent houses made of artificial materials, but on the holiday of Sukkot we take shelter in the shade of branches, and we recognize the nature around us.

The sages referred to the sukkah as "Tzila Damhimnota" - the shade of faith, because it is reminiscent of the clouds of honor that led us through the desert.

The sukkah brings us back to our original nature, breaking down the artificial partitions that separate Jews from one another.

It is precisely the temporary walls of the sukkah that emphasize that there is no substance to the things that separate us. "All of Israel deserves to sit in one sukkah" (Sukkah 27:2). The concept of Jewish unity is underscored when we realize that we cannot fulfill the mitzvah of the four species until we have each element bundled together.

Strength and unity of the nuclear family is also important - something we have learned repeatedly this year.

May we merit to see the rebuilding of the fallen Sukkah of David.

Wishing you a Chag Sameach

Laws of Sukkot

Building the Sukkah

1. It is a mitzvah to start building the sukkah on Motzei Yom Kippur. It is advisable to complete the work by the next day.
2. The mitzvah of "love your neighbor as yourself" obliges us not to build the sukkah at a time when it will disturb the neighbors.
3. The sukkah must be located outdoors, in a place without a bad smell, strong winds, flies or mosquitoes, or any other type of disturbance
4. The length and width of the sukkah shall not be less than seven by seven tefachim (56 by 56 cm), and its height shall not be less than ten tefachim (80 cm) and not more than twenty cubits (9.6 meters).

In a pressing situation 2 walls and a partial wall on the third side can be sufficient for a sukkah.

The Sides of the Sukkah

5. The sides of the sukkah can be made of any material, even from materials that are not suitable for schach.

6. Do not use a wall that will sway in a common wind. If you still decide to use sheets or something similar, you should attach branches or wires to the bottom of the wall at a distance of less than 24 cm from each other.

7. The wall should be at least 80 cm high. If the wall does not start from the floor or does not reach the schach, and the distance between the wall and the floor / schach is less than 24 cm, the wall is considered kosher.

8. Do not place the schach directly on top of anything that can become *tamei*.

Therefore, if the entire frame of the sukkah is made of metal, the schach should not be placed directly on top of the metal. Rather, wooden beams should be placed over the metal along the length and width of the sukkah, and the schach will rest on top of the wood. Although if it is not possible to obtain wooden beams, the schach may be placed on the metal beams.

Schach

9. The schach must come from the ground and be detached from the ground, and it must be made of something that does not become *tamei*. Things that can become *tamei* are mostly tools used by man, such as: a ladder, chair, bench etc.

10. The Sages forbade schach that is made of the following things:

- Boards that are 24 cm wide, even if they are laid on their side.
- Bundles of straw or branches that are tied together.
- Something that in the past could have become *tamei*, though now it can no longer, such as broken vessels.

- Schach that smells bad.

- Schach made of leaves that are quick to fall, dry, or wither.

11. The schach should cause the sukkah to have more shade than sun. Therefore, if the schach causes the sukkah have equal sun and shade, the sukkah is not kosher.

12. The stars should be able to be seen through the schach at night. But if the schach is thick and the stars cannot be seen, he has still fulfilled the mitzvah. But if the schach is so thick that even heavy rain does not get through, some say that the sukkah is not kosher because it resembles a house, so very thick schach should be avoided.

13. Schach that is very thin and has a lot of holes, but the width of each hole is less than 24 cm, and in total the shade it provides is more than the sun, the whole sukkah is kosher. But if the schach has a hole 24 cm wide or more, some say that the entire sukkah is not kosher. In any case, one should not eat while seated under this hole.

14. If in the middle of the sukkah there is invalid schach that is 32 cm wide or more, and it is placed along the entire length or width of the sukkah, then the sukkah is not kosher. But if the invalid schach is on the sides of the sukkah, it is disqualified only if it is 4 cubits (1.92 meters) wide or more. In any case, one should not eat or sleep under the invalid schach.

15. The schach should not be attached or positioned on things that can become *tamei*, for example: the schach should not be nailed to the boards below it. An iron mesh or metal pipes should not be placed around it to keep it from flying away. If one has no other means to arrange the schach, he is permitted to do this.

16. The schach should only be put on the sukkah after the walls have been erected, otherwise the sukkah is not kosher.

17. Using a pergola: In order to use a pergola for a sukkah, a number of things must be checked. First, do the beams fit the criteria to be considered schach? Is the width of the beams less than 32 cm? Will more beams be added so that there will be more shade than sun in the sukkah? Are the beams not completely adjacent to each other, so that the sukkah will be considered temporary and not a permanent home?

The pergola has a number of additional problems which must be resolved in the following steps: If the pergola does not have sides: arrange the sides, then remove the pergola screws, lift the roof beams and put them back in place without the screws, then the sukkah is kosher.

Or if the pergola is not attached with screws there is no need to remove them and lift the beams. Instead, just lift one beam (must be 8 cm wide).

If the pergola has sides: if it is known that the roof beams were laid separately one by one, it is not necessary to lift all the beams, but only one beam, as mentioned above.

18. On Chol HaMoed it is permitted to rearrange schach that has blown off. On Yom Tov or on Shabbat it is forbidden to arrange or bring back schach that has blown away. It is permitted for a non-Jew to return or rearrange the schach.

19. On Chol HaMoed, sukkah decorations may be removed provided that they will not be used for something other than the sukkah. But on Shabbat and Yom Tov, the decorations are considered muktzah, so you can move them on Shabbat and Yom Tov only if it was your intention to do so.

If you do remove the decorations on Shabbat and Yom Tov, be careful not to do anything that violates Shabbat/Yom Tov such as loosening knots, removing nails, etc.

20. If you cover your sukkah with schach made of branches that are still attached to the ground, and then you cut the branches, the schach is not kosher, unless you raise the schach piece by piece and rearrange it.

The Mitzvah of Sitting in the Sukkah

21. For the 7 days of Sukkot, one should make his house his temporary dwelling and his sukkah his permanent dwelling, that is: he should eat, sleep, and dwell in the sukkah as he dwells in his house all year.

22. If one is davening alone he should daven in the sukkah.

23. Foods such as fruits or sweets, or grains or breads with a volume of less than 57.6 cc (according to the GR" A), if they are not considered a meal, do not have to be eaten in the sukkah. One is permitted to be strict and eat these foods in the sukkah.

It is permitted to drink outside the sukkah.

24. On the first night of Sukkot one should start eating in the sukkah even if it is raining.

In the case of rain on the first night, one should make kiddush and eat a *kezayit* of bread (25.6 cc-according to the GR" A) inside the sukkah, and then continue to eat inside the house. But he should not make the bracha of *leshev basukkah*.

25. One should eat the meal when it is night. If he began to eat before the stars came out, he must go back to the sukkah and eat again, but he should not recite the bracha of *leshev basukkah* a second time.

26. On the night of Sukkot, four brachot are made during kiddush in the following order: *Hagafen, mikadesh Yisrael vihazamanim, leshev basukkah, shehecheyanu*.

27. It is forbidden to sleep outside the sukkah even for a nap. If one accidentally falls asleep outside the sukkah he should still go into the sukkah if he wakes up and wants to continue sleeping.

28. If he ate or slept in the sukkah and went inside due to the rain, he is not obliged to return to the sukkah when the rain stops.

Exemptions from the Sukkah

29. Women are exempt from the mitzvah of sukkah. The Shulchan Aruch ruled that women should not make the bracha of *leshev basukkah*, and the Rama ruled that they can make the bracha. Therefore, Ashkenazi women say the bracha of *leshev basukkah* when they eat in the sukkah.

30. If it rains in the sukkah, and the rain is enough to spoil the food, one should go into the house. Heavy rain exempts everyone from eating and sleeping in the sukkah, and one who stays in the sukkah despite heavy rains is not rewarded.

31. One who is sick, even if he is not in danger, but he has a headache or eye pain, etc., is exempt from sitting in the sukkah if it is difficult for him to do so. And a person who relies on assistance from others is also exempt.

32. One who is in pain is exempt from the sukkah. Therefore, if being in the sukkah is difficult for someone due to bothersome conditions such as flies and mosquitoes, strong wind, extreme cold, etc, he is exempt from sitting in the sukkah.

33. Travelers are exempt from the sukkah.

34. Is it permissible to go on a trip to a place where there is no sukkah? Most poskim seem to allow this, but R. Moshe Feinstein ruled that one who has no choice but to travel to a place without a sukkah may do so, but one should not do so simply for a pleasure trip.

35. Guards are exempt from the sukkah so long as they are busy doing their work as guards.

36. Those who are engaged in a mitzvah and those who are traveling must eat and sleep in a sukkah if they have access to one without any hassle.

Laws of the Four Species

Obligations of the Four Species

1. Every Jewish man is obligated to take the four species with a bracha on every day of Sukkot, except for Shabbat.
2. Women are exempt from taking the four species, but if they want to they are permitted. Ashkenazi women customarily say the bracha when taking the 4 species, but Sephardic women refrain from saying the bracha.

Time and Place of the Mitzvah

3. According to the Torah, we are commanded to take the four species only on the first day of Sukkot, but the sages decided that we are to take the lulav on all days of Sukkot.
4. The four species are not taken on Shabbat, even when the first day of Sukkot falls on Shabbat.
5. One may take the four species anytime during the day, but not at night.
6. We are commanded to shake the lulav during the recitation of Hallel, and some have the custom to say the bracha on the four species in the sukkah and shake the lulav prior to saying Hallel, and then shake it again during Hallel.
7. It is forbidden to eat before taking the four species, and we should be strict about this unless someone is in great need of food. Tasting is permitted prior to taking the four species.

Taking the Four Species

8. One cannot fulfill this mitzvah using a stolen set of four species. Therefore, one should purchase the four species from a trusted source.
9. The four species should be taken in the same direction as they grow: the head should be held upwards and the lower part should face downwards. For an etrog, the pitum should be held facing upwards, and its stem facing downwards. One who holds them incorrectly does not fulfill the mitzvah.
10. A lulav should be taken in the right hand and an etrog in the left. If one made a mistake and did the opposite he has still fulfilled the mitzvah, and he should try to redo it without making another bracha.
11. The spine of the lulav should face the one who is taking it.
12. It is customary to tie the hadasim on the right side of the lulav, and the aravot on the left side. Some have the custom to tie one of the hadasim on the right, one on the left, and one in the middle, and one arava on the right, and one on the left. Both ways are permitted.

Brachot of the Mitzvah

13. As with all mitzvot, one should say the bracha before doing the mitzvah. Therefore, the one who is taking the four species must say the bracha before taking the etrog in his hand, or he should hold the etrog upside down (with the pitum facing down) while saying the bracha, and immediately he should flip the etrog so that the pitum is facing up, and then he can shake it.

14. The bracha of *al netilat lulav* should be said, and on the first day that he takes the four species one should also say the bracha of *shehecheyanu*. Therefore, when the first day of Sukkot falls on Shabbat (when we do not take the four species) one should say *shehecheyanu* on the first day when the species are taken.

The Lulav

15. A lulav whose spine is smaller than four tefachim (32 cm) is invalid.

16. The lulav should protrude above the heads of the hadasim and aravot by at least one tefach (8 cm).

17. A lulav that is curved toward its back, next to the spine, is kosher. But a lulav that is curved toward the front side where the leaves are, or to one side is invalid.

16. If the middle leaf of the spine of the lulav is divided into two parts, according to the Ashkenazi custom, the lulav is invalid. But Sepharadim do not disqualify the lulav when the middle leaf is divided, except if a majority of the leaves of the lulav are divided.

17. If the head of the lulav is cut or cracked, and the spine is bent or the upper leaf is not doubled from the beginning of its growth, the lulav is invalid.

The Etrog

18. An etrog that is smaller than a *kibeitzah* (57.6 cc) is invalid.

19. An etrog that is perforated from side to side, an etrog that has a perforation that is 2.3 cm in size, an etrog that is completely smooth, cracked, peeled, or has a missing pitum or stem is invalid.

20. A etrog that is dried out, has a black or white appearance, is mottled, rotten, boiled, or round as a ball is invalid.

The Hadasim (Myrtle)

21. It is said in the Torah "and take for yourself ... a thick tree branch", and sages learned that since the Torah wrote this description in three words, three stalks of hadasim are needed for the observance of the mitzvah (and some add more).

22. A hadas with a stem that is shorter than three tefachim (24 cm) is invalid.

23. Look for a hadas where all three leaves come out of one place, (a 'triangular hadas'), and if most of it is a triangle it can be used. A hadas that is not triangular at all is invalid.

The Aravot - Willow

24. It is said in the Torah: "And take for yourselves ... an *Aravei Nahal*, and the sages learned that two stalks of willow should be taken for this mitzvah.

25. An arava with a spine shorter than three tefachim (24 cm) is invalid.

26. The poplar (a tree that resembles an arava) is invalid, and one must be careful to use only aravot.

27. A dry arava whose head has been cut, broken, or most of the leaves have dropped off is invalid.

Differences Between the First Day and the Other Days of the Holiday

28. The sages learned that the four species should be complete on the first day of the holiday, but on the other days if they are blemished or have defects they are still kosher.

Order of Shaking

29. There are two methods regarding the shaking of the four species:

a. The Shulchan Aruch method (and Ashkenazim also practice this way) - rotate to the right (clockwise): east (actually east, not in the direction of Jerusalem!), South, west, north, up, down. B. The method of the Ari (which is the practices of the Hasidim) - south, north, east, up, down, west.

31. When do you shake the lulav during Hallel?

A. The Ashkenazi custom: The chazan shakes twice: in *hodu Lashem* and in *yomer na Yisrael*, and the congregation shake four times: in each *hodu Lashem*. The chazan and the congregation shake twice in *ana Hashem hoshia na*, and twice more in *hodu Lashem* at the end of Hallel.

B. The Sephardic custom (and the custom of Ashkenazi Hasidim): The chazzan and the congregation shake once in *hodu Lashem*, twice in *ana Hashem hoshia na*, and once in *hodu Lashem* at the end of Hallel.

C. It is important to note that most important shaking is during the bracha, and shaking during Hallel is a custom. If you make a mistake when you shake the lulav you have still fulfilled the mitzvah.

32. Regarding a bracha on the lulav for Sephardic women - there is a difference of opinion. (HaRav Ovadiah forbids women to say the bracha and HaRav Eliyahu allows them.)

33. Additional laws:

A. There is no need to look for defects and dots in an etrog with a magnifying glass. The measure is whether the defect is visible to ordinary eyes from the distance at which the etrog is generally taken.

B. One must buy an etrog that has been certified as kosher to make sure that it is not actually a lemon, (in fact all the four species need kosher certification, but special care must be taken with etrogs).

The Laws of Chol HaMoed

The Mitzvah of Chol Hamoed

1. Just as it is a mitzvah to honor and delight in Shabbat, so too it is a mitzvah to honor and delight in Chol HaMoed by wearing special clothing and eating and drinking special foods.
2. During Chol Hamoed, clean clothes must be worn, and it is preferable to wear Shabbat clothes.
3. It is a mitzvah to be happy and in good spirits on Chol HaMoed, we therefore eat meat, drink wine, and enjoy good foods.
4. It is a mitzvah to have a seudah in the morning and evening of Chol HaMoed, but it is not obligatory.
5. In *Birkat Hamazon*, *Yaaleh Veyavo* is added. If one forgot to say *Yaaleh Veyavo* and has already begun to say the next bracha, he should not repeat *Birkat Hamazon*.
6. At Shacharit, Mincha, and Maariv, *Yaaleh Veyavo* is added to the Amidah. If he forgot before he took the steps at the end of the prayer, he should go back to the bracha of *retzeh*. If he remembers after taking the steps, he should return to the beginning of the prayer.
7. In the morning, after the repetition of the Amidah, the complete Hallel is said.

Prohibitions of Working

8. In order to differentiate Chol HaMoed from a regular weekday, some work is forbidden
9. Routine activities that are not bothersome, such as talking on the phone, driving a car, etc., are permitted, even if they are not being done for the purpose of the holiday.
10. Writing, commerce, and other kinds of work that take even a little effort must not be done on Chol HaMoed if they are not being done for the purpose of the holiday. But if they lend any benefit or pleasure to the holiday (such as solving crossword puzzles), or if the work is very likely to be needed, it is permitted to do.
11. Doing work (aside from cooking) on Chol HaMoed is allowed only when it was not possible to do this work before. If one purposely postponed his work in order to do it on Chol HaMoed, he may not do it.
12. For the sake of the public it is permissible to do work that does not require skill, even if it will not bring benefit or pleasure to the holiday itself.
13. Work that requires training or skill (such as construction work) may not be done on Chol HaMoed even for the sake of the holiday, except in the following cases:
 - Preparing meals for the holidays, as well as repairing the kitchen utensils that will be used for preparing the meals.
 - Doing what is required for the needs of the body, such as: repairing the shower that will be used during the holiday.
 - Preventing financial loss or damage to one's health

- Doing work that is for the sake of the public

14. It is forbidden to shave or get a haircut on Chol HaMoed, as everyone is encouraged to show honor to the holiday by doing these things before the holiday begins.

15. Similarly, doing laundry on Chol HaMoed is not allowed, However, ironing is permitted.

16. Cleaning a stain on a garment is allowed, if the garment got dirty during the holiday, or if the individual does not have another garment to wear (in this case he can clean it even if it got dirty before the holiday).

17. It is permitted to wash socks and other clothes that typically get dirty frequently, if they got dirty during the holiday and there are no others that can be used. If one is washing this type of clothing, it is permissible to put additional clothes that will be needed during the holiday into the washing machine.

18. It is forbidden to buy or sell on Chol HaMoed, but it is permitted to buy/sell things that will be needed during the holiday. It is also permitted to buy/sell if one has an opportunity for a lucrative deal that will be difficult to come by once the holiday is over. It is permitted to spend money that will add to the joy of Yom Tov.

19. Any work that is forbidden to do on Chol Hamoed must also not be done by a non-Jew.

Tefillin

20. In Israel it is customary not to wear Tefillin on Chol HaMoed. Some put on Tefillin in private without saying a bracha.

Isru Chag

21. On Isru Chag, the day after the holiday, it is customary to eat and drink a bit more than usual, and one should not fast or eulogize.

Shemini Atzeret / Simchat Torah

1. The bracha of *Shecheyanu* is said at the beginning of Shemini Atzeret (women say it while lighting candles and men say it at Kiddush).

2. During the Amidah and *Birkat Hamazon* one should say *et yom shemini chag ha'atzeret hazeh*, or *et yom shemini atzeret hachag hazeh*, according to his custom. Whoever mistakenly mentions "Sukkot" should repeat the prayer.

3. Do not sit in the sukkah on Shemini Atzeret (this is especially important for new immigrants who might be used to sitting in the sukkah even on Shemini Atzeret!).

4. Anyone who wishes to sit in the sukkah for any reason on Shemini Atzeret must "damage" it (by removing part of the schach) before the holiday.

5. There are no special laws regarding Shemini Atzeret. The usual laws of Yom Tov apply (being joyful, eating good food, etc).

6. Outside of Israel, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are two separate days. In Israel they are on the same day, so some of the Simchat Torah customs "overshadow" Shemini Atzeret.

7. We read from three Torahs on Shemini Atzeret: from the first we read *parshat Vezot HaBracha*, from the second we read *Bereishit*, and from the third we read the maftir from *parshat Pinchas*.

8. Ashkenazim say *Yizkor* after reading Torah and Haftarah.

9. Before Musaf, the prayer for rain is said. There are different customs and different formulas for the prayer for rain.

10. The Rama wrote: It is customary for the one who finishes the Torah and begins at the beginning to rejoice and make a feast. In the evening and the morning of Simchat Torah it is customary to take out all the Torah scrolls and sing with them, and to walk the Torahs in circles around the *bima* just as was done with the lulav. Many people are called to read from the Torah, and one parsha is read many times. All the children are called to the Torah, and the parsha of *Hamalach Hagoel* is read. And at night the *Nedarim* that are in the Torah are read. Every place should act according to their custom.

11. Although these words are from the Rama, many of these customs are also practiced in Sephardic communities, except for reading the Torah on the night of Simchat Torah. The Ashkenazi custom is not as written in the Rama, but instead they read *parshat Vezot Habrach*

12. When rejoicing on Simchat Torah one must be exceedingly careful to act respectfully and appropriately, to increase the joy of the Torah and not to harm or cause grief to others.

13. Some places have the custom of doing *hakafot* during Mincha and also at the end of the holiday after maariv (called 'second hakafot'), in order to further honor and rejoice in the Torah.

Mourning on Sukkot

14. A mourner is obligated to sit in the sukkah.

It is stated in the Rama that one who is within the 12 months of mourning for his father or mother, or one who is newly mourning another relative should not participate in *hakafot* with the lulav on Chol HaMoed, but on Hoshana Rabbah and Yom Tov he is permitted. And some have written that there is no difference between Ashkenazim and Sephardim in this matter, and one may do the *hakafot* on all the days.

