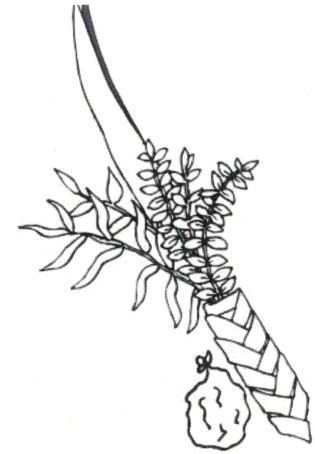


# סוכות SUKKOT



*Chag haAsif* – חג האסיף  
Festival of the Ingathering

*Z'man Simchateinu* – זמן שמחתנו  
Season of our Rejoicing

Sukkot is a harvest festival. While Jews are widely known as the People of the Book, the ancient Israelites were a people of the land, mostly farmers and shepherds. Rather than contemplate God's sacred Torah, they contemplated God's sacred Creation. Sukkot is a celebration of nature, God's creation, and the land on which we live. Since the ancient Israelites were farmers and shepherds, many of the holidays that we celebrate today began as agricultural festivals.

Sukkot is called *Z'man Simchateinu* (Season of Our Rejoicing) and it is the only festival associated with an explicit commandment to rejoice. Sukkot is also called *Chag HaAsif*, (Festival of the Ingathering), representing a time to give thanks for the bounty of the earth during the fall harvest.

As such, the festival celebration includes symbols of the land and the welcoming of guests. Sukkot exemplifies our covenant with God and our Jewish mission of pursuing holiness, justice, and acts of loving-kindness. It is a blessing to invite families, friends, neighbors and even strangers who do not have a sukkah of their own and to join others in their sukkah.

ארבע מינים - *Arbah Minim*  
The Four Species  
The Lulav and the Etrog

“On the first day, you will take for yourselves a fruit of the hadar tree, palm branches, twigs of a leafy tree and brook willows, and you will rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days.”  
(Leviticus 23:40)

**Willow – ערבה**  
(*Arava*)  
Brook Willows

**Myrtle – הדס**  
(*Hadas*)  
Twigs of a Leafy Tree

**Lulav – לולב**  
(*Lulav*)  
Palm Branches

**Etrog – אתרוג**  
(*Etrog*)  
Fruit of the Hadar Tree

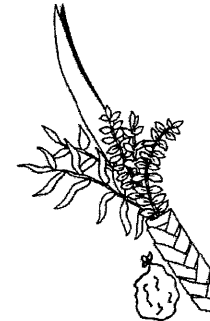
**What do the Four Species symbolize?**

Midrash: Leviticus Rabbah 30:12

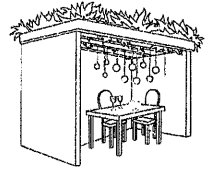
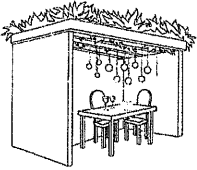
- **THE FRUIT OF THE HADAR TREE** symbolizes Israel; just as the **etrog** has taste as well as fragrance, so are there Jews who possess learning and good deeds.
- **PALM BRANCHES**, also applies to Israel; as the **palm-tree** has taste but not fragrance, so are there Jews who possess learning but not good deeds.
- **TWIGS OF A LEAFY TREE** likewise applies to Israel; just as the **myrtle** has fragrance but no taste, so are there Jews who possess good deeds but not learning.
- **AND BROOK WILLOWS** also applies to Israel; just as the **willow** has no taste and no fragrance, so are there Jews who possess neither learning nor good deeds.

Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 30:14

- The rib of the **LULAV** resembles the spine of a person;
- The **MYRTLE** resembles the eye;
- The **WILLOW** resembles the mouth,
- And the **ETROG** resembles the heart.



## Laws For Building a Sukkah



1. According to Bet Shammai, the *sukkah* must be large enough to contain a man's head, most of his body, and his table (Talmud, *Sukkah* 2:7).
2. The walls of the *sukkah* may be made of any material, but must be sturdy enough to withstand an ordinary wind (Code of Jewish Law, *Orach Chayim* 630: 10).
3. It is meritorious to start building the *sukkah* immediately after Yom Kippur, even if it is Friday, because a chance to perform a mitzvah should not be put off. One should choose for it a clean site. Everyone should build the *sukkah*, even if one is an eminent person (Code of Jewish Law, Condensed Version, Chapter 134).
4. There are many different opinions regarding the roofing of the *sukkah*. However, since we generally cover it with the branches of trees, or with reeds, which are detached products of the soil and not subject to defilement and are not tied together, there is no cause for scruples (Code of Jewish Law, Condensed Version, Chapter 134).
5. Enough boughs should be placed upon the *sukkah* so as to have more shade than sun. If it has more sun than shade, it is invalid. It is therefore necessary to put on enough branches, so that even if they should dry up, there would still be more shade than sun (Code of Jewish Law, Condensed Version, Chapter 134).
6. A *sukkah* that is erected underneath the branches of a tree is invalid. Even if the branches by themselves would provide more sun than shade, and the *sukkah* has been adjusted by means of putting there on extra branches, it is, nevertheless, invalid (Code of Jewish Law, Condensed Version, Chapter 134).
7. The obligation may be fulfilled with a borrowed *sukkah* but not with one that is stolen. Hence, a *sukkah* may not be erected on a public place. In an emergency, however, when one has no other *sukkah* available, one may sit in such a *sukkah* and say the prescribed benediction (Code of Jewish Law, Condensed Version, Chapter 134).

# An Elephant Sukkah?!?

## Sukkah 22b-23b

MISHNAH. IF ONE BUILDS A SUKKAH ON THE TOP OF A WAGON, OR ON THE DECK OF A SHIP, IT IS VALID AND THEY MAY GO UP INTO IT ON THE FESTIVAL. IF ONE MADE IT ON THE TOP OF A TREE, OR ON THE BACK OF A CAMEL, IT IS VALID, BUT THEY MAY NOT GO UP INTO IT ON THE FESTIVAL. IF THE TREE [FORMED] TWO [WALLS] AND ONE WAS MADE BY THE HANDS OF MAN, OR IF TWO WERE MADE BY THE HANDS OF MAN AND ONE WAS FORMED BY THE TREE, IT IS VALID, BUT THEY MAY NOT GO UP INTO IT ON THE FESTIVAL. IF THREE WALLS WERE MADE BY THE HANDS OF MAN AND ONE WAS FORMED BY THE TREE, IT IS VALID AND THEY MAY GO UP INTO IT ON THE FESTIVAL. THIS IS THE GENERAL RULE: WHATEVER CAN STAND BY ITSELF IF THE TREE WERE TAKEN AWAY IS VALID, AND THEY MAY GO UP INTO IT ON THE FESTIVAL.

GEMARA. According to whom is our Mishnah? According to R. Akiba, as it has been taught, one who builds a Sukkah on the deck of a ship, R. Gamaliel declares it invalid and R. Akiba valid. It happened with R. Gamaliel and R. Akiba when they were journeying on a ship that R. Akiba arose and built a Sukkah on the deck of the ship. The next day the wind blew and tore it away. R. Gamaliel said to him, Akiba, where is thy Sukkah?...

OR ON THE BACK OF A CAMEL etc. According to whom is [this part of] our Mishnah? — According to R. Meir, as it has been taught, If one makes a Sukkah upon the back of an animal, R. Meir declares it valid and R. Judah invalid. What is the reason of R. Judah? — Since Scripture says, Thou shalt keep the feast of Sukkot for seven days. A Sukkah which is suitable for seven days is called a valid Sukkah; if it is unsuitable for seven days it is not called a valid Sukkah. And R. Meir? — According to Torah law this [Sukkah] is also suitable [for seven days], and it is only the Rabbis who decreed against it.

If he used an animal as a wall of the Sukkah, R. Meir declares it invalid and R. Judah valid, for R. Meir used to say, Whatever contains the breath of life can be made neither a wall for a Sukkah, nor a side-post for an alley, nor boards around wells, nor a covering stone for a grave. In the name of R. Jose the Galilean they said, Nor may a bill of divorcement be written upon it.

What is the reason of R. Meir? — Abaye replied, Lest it die. R. Zera replied, Lest it escape.

Concerning an elephant securely bound, all agree [that the Sukkah is valid], since even though it die, there is still ten [handbreadths height] in its carcass.

Regarding what then do they dispute? Regarding an elephant which is not bound. According to him who says, Lest it die, we do not fear; according to him who says, We fear lest it escape, we do fear. But according to him who says, Lest it die, let us fear also lest it escape? — Rather say, Regarding an elephant which is not bound, all agree [that the Sukkah is invalid]; Regarding what do they dispute? Regarding an [ordinary] animal which is bound: According to him who says, Lest it die, we fear [for that] according to him who says, Lest it escape, we have no fear. But according to him who says, Lest it escape, let us fear lest it die? — Death is not a frequent occurrence. But is there not an open space between [the animal's legs]? — [It refers to] where he filled it in with branches of palms and bay-trees. But might it not lie down? — [It refers to] where it was tied with cords from above.

And according to him who says, Lest it die, is it not tied with cords from above?— It may occur that it is made to stand within three [handbreadths] of the covering but when it dies, it shrinks, and this might not enter his mind...

# Ushpizin – אושפיזין

## Heavenly Guests

Sukkot is associated with the Jewish value of הכנסת אורחים *Hachnasat Orchim* (hospitality). We welcome friends, family, and the community into our sukkah and we visit others. Our tradition teaches us that we also welcome heavenly or spiritual guests, *Ushpizin*, into our sukkah.

According to mystical (Kabbalah) tradition, each sukkah is blessed with visits by seven “heavenly guests,” shepherds of the Jewish people: Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David. A more modern tradition is to also invite *Ushpizot*, female figures from Jewish tradition. There are a number of different takes on the idea of *Ushpizot*: who they are, why they are selected, and how they relate to the *Ushpizin*. One take on this is that in addition to the *Ushpizin*, we are joined in our sukkah by Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Avigail, Hannah, Huldah, and Esther; seven biblical women who the Talmud says were prophetesses. Another tradition of *Ushpizot* assigns a female counterpart to the traditional seven men (see table below).

Regardless of the take on *Ushizot* and *Ushpizin*, the overall concept is that by welcoming each into the sukkah we draw from the special blessings that they each imparted to the world and that each guest represents both a historical theme and a mystical divine attribute, known in Kabbalah as a *Sefirah*.

<u>Ushpizin</u>	<u>Ushpizot</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u>Divine Attributes</u>
Abraham	Sarah	Faith	Chesed- חסד loving-kindness, benevolence
Isaac	Rebecca	Foundation	Gevurah- גבורה personal strength, restraint, discipline
Jacob	Leah	Future	Tiferet- תפארת splendor, beauty, harmony, truth
Joseph	Rachel	Nurture	Netzach- נצח eternity, victory, endurance
Moses	Miriam	Freedom	Hod- הוד glory, humility, empathy
Aaron	Deborah	Peace	Yesod- יסוד foundation, connection, holiness
David	Ruth	Living Legacy	Malchut- מלכות sovereignty, leadership, receptiveness

**Abraham and Sarah:**

We welcome Abraham and Sarah, who parented a faith and a people together. They carried that faith from their home in Haran out into the wilderness to the place that God would show them, to the promised land. They kept their faith wherever they traveled. May we live up to their example of faithfulness and resilience in all that we do.

**Isaac and Rebecca:**

We welcome Isaac and Rebecca, who carried forward the foundation of our people and passed on our legacy to future generations. They prospered and, therefore, allowed us to prosper as well. May we live up to their example of strengthening the foundation of our tradition and passing on our inheritance to future generations.

**Jacob and Leah:**

We welcome Jacob and Leah, who grew our people's numbers through their many children. They ensured our future in size and might. May we live up to their example of ensuring a strong and confident Jewish future.

**Joseph and Rachel:**

We welcome Joseph and Rachel, son and mother, who cared for both generations that were and generations that would come to be. They nurtured our people through trying times and through good times. May we live up their examples of compassion, vision and hope, allowing our dreams to become reality.

**Moses and Miriam:**

We welcome Moses and Miriam, brother and sister, who helped to bring our people from slavery to freedom. They led Israel in the wilderness and prompted communal singing in praise of God at the Sea of Reeds. May we live up to their example, working towards freedom of the oppressed and inspiring songs of praise.

**Aaron and Deborah:**

We welcome Aaron and Deborah, priest and judge, who both helped to shape Israel's destiny. One called for peace in the wilderness among the bickering of the people, the other called for battle to create peace in the Land of Israel. May we live up their examples of pursuing peace through courage and wisdom, and lay the foundations for a time when all humanity can live in harmony and friendship.

**David and Ruth:**

We welcome David and Ruth, grandson and grandmother, who represent the living legacy of the people of Israel, our past and our future. One was a foreigner whose connection led her to join our people, the other founded our eternal spiritual capital in Jerusalem. May we live up to their example by welcoming all who choose to join us, creating an eternal legacy and connection to our heritage.

**Solomon and Esther:** \*\*\*For communities that observe an 8th day of the festival of Sukkot.\*\*\*

We welcome Solomon and Esther who both exercised royal judgement in the interests of Israel's well-being. They fought for equal protection and rights for their people both in our homeland and as a minority in a foreign land. May we live up to their example of wisdom and determination, continually striving for the betterment of our people.

What are the top 3 qualities and character traits of the *Ushpizin* and *Ushpizot* that you try to live up to everyday?

Who and/or what do you want to welcome into your lives during the coming year? (rest, self-love, etc)