



SCHECHTER

A Sukkot Full of Ruach

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One of my fondest childhood memories is when my family built our Sukkah. I don't remember being part of the building process, but I remember the way our Sukkah looked, pieces of odds and ends nailed together to make a structure that we hoped would survive the holiday.

I remember the visits that we made to our friends' Sukkot and the wonderful experience of sitting outside together, singing, laughing and enjoying each other's company. I could not wait for my opportunity to build my own Sukkah.

It wasn't until 2004, when I moved my family to Miami, Florida that I built my first Sukkah. It was a very exciting time – I researched online how to build one, what materials I would need and how to make sure that it was the correct dimensions. I decided in the end to buy a Sukkah kit. The Sukkah was 8x12 and was made with metal conduit. The schach (roof covering) that we used was a bamboo mat. It was an incredible experience building the Sukkah and I could not wait to have guests over to enjoy it.

In 2005 I had a much different experience during Sukkot. In the first two summers that we lived in Miami, we were struck by no fewer than 8 Hurricanes. Each time a storm came we had to put up our storm shutters, in essence making our home seem like a cave. Schools were canceled days before the storms came, stores and gas stations quickly ran out of supplies, and TV stations went to 24 hour coverage.

On October 25, 2005, Hurricane Wilma pounded South Florida. The storm caused damage to homes, businesses and Sukkot. That day, October 25, was Hoshana Rabbah, the day on which we beat our willow branches asking God to carry our sins away in the wind. The next day, Shemini Atzeret is the day on which we add into our daily prayers the words, *Mashiv Haruach Umorid Hagashem* (Who brings wind and pours down rain). Clearly, God acted a day early.

As the storm approached I asked my Rabbi what I should do about my Sukkah. Should I take it down? Should I trust that God would keep it standing? My Rabbi reminded me of what happened to our area of Miami in 1992 with Hurricane Andrew. Hurricane Andrew destroyed most of the homes in the Kendall and Pinecrest area. Citizens were without power and running water for weeks, months even. Many of the citizens moved from the area after the storm, carrying their few possessions that remained. Take it down, my Rabbi told me, but wait till the last possible minute.

I was concerned. Clearly I would take down my Sukkah, not wanting to cause damage to it, my property or the property of anyone else in our neighborhood, but how would I fulfill the Mitzvah of eating 14 meals in the Sukkah? Five meals a day took care of the problem and I took down my Sukkah on October 24th. Knowing that the storm was near, our Rabbi passed out the Hoshanot, our bundles of willow on the 24th. We were told that we would probably have to do this ceremony ourselves.

I can remember the morning of the 25th very clearly. It was a loud swirling wind (that we could hear but not see as the shutters closed out any possibility of seeing outside). It was a very scary experience. We could hear branches breaking, things crashing and rain pounding. And then it all stopped. I went outside and saw a beautiful site. The storm had passed and the sun was shining. I took a chair out to my backyard. Took my Lulav and Etrog and did my Hoshanot, beating my willow and thanking God for allowing the storm to pass over with seemingly minimal damage.

After a storm hits there is often no power. The summers in Miami can be brutally hot. The food in your freezer defrosts and you don't want to use your gas up driving around town (not to mention the downed trees in the middle of the road).

Being fairly unscathed by the storm, that night we drove to shul for Shemini Atzeret. The shul was very crowded (as no one had anywhere else that they could go and our shul was only one of two that opened for the holiday). The next 48 hours had us mostly at shul with our friends celebrating the end of Sukkot.

Our shul remained without power over the course of the next few days. On October 26th Simchat Torah began. We did not have power inside the synagogue to dance with the Torah, nor did we have enough light outside to see. The janitor of the shul took everyone's car keys, drove our cars around the side of the building and we did Hakafot using the headlights of our cars. It was one of the most incredible experiences of my life.

We made it through the storm, through that Sukkot and through two more wonderful years of Sukkot in Miami.

My Sukkah survived four years in Miami, and over 10 Hurricanes, yet in 2009 the heavy winds of Beachwood, Ohio knocked over my Sukkah and bent 93 inch pieces of steel conduit in half.

This year, as I rebuild my Sukkah (with stronger reinforcement), I am reminded of the true meaning of Ruach (wind). Ruach also means spirit and devotion. My hope for this coming Sukkot is that Ruach does not impact the walls of my Sukkah in, but that the Ruach inside of my Sukkah can have an impact on those on outside.

AS A FAMILY:

- Build lifelong memories by building your own Sukkah.
- Eat in a friend's Sukkah (if you would like to have a meal in someone's Sukkah, please email dweiss@grossschechter.org, or aeppeperstone@grossschechter.org to have a meal arranged in someone's Sukkah.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE TORAH READINGS FOR SUKKOT, TRY TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

1. What are the Pilgrimage festivals?
2. What special sacrifices were brought on those days?
3. What vision did Moshe have?
4. What promise does God make the people?

A “How To” Mealtime *Sukkah* Guide for 5771

The beginning two days of *Sukkot*, then the two days after *Sukkot* (called *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah*), both begin on Wednesday nights this year. There are many rules about when and where to light candles, recite *Kiddush*, when to sit, where to eat, etc. Talk about complicated! We hope the following summary helps you comfortably choreograph the various meals and candle lighting times. Customs vary among Jews and *shuls*, so ask your Rabbi if you have any questions.

Wednesday Evening September 22nd, Erev Sukkot

- Jewish Law (*Halacha*) instructs us not to light a new flame on a *Yom Tov* (holiday) or *Shabbat*, but we are allowed use an existing flame on the holiday. Why is this important? Well, you have to light candles on the 2nd night of the holiday, as well as light candles before *Shabbat* on Friday afternoon. What do you do? Read on...
- Set out a *Yahrzeit* candle (light one before sunset so you will have a “utility flame” to use Thursday night). Another option is to leave a gas burner on your stovetop lit for the next three days (keep a huge, covered pot of water over a low flame). You can add water on Thursday and Friday, but not on *Shabbat*.
- Light candles by **7:04pm** (light the “utility flame” first)
- Candle lighting in the *sukkah*, weather-permitting: *l’hadlik ner shel Yom Tov* and *Shehecheyanu*
- [**Note:** some people “wash” (do *netilat yadayim*) before going out to recite *Kiddush* so they don’t have to go in and out of the *Sukkah*]
- Blessing over wine: *Kiddush* (using the words and melody for the *Chagim*)
- Blessing for dwelling in the *sukkah*: *Leyshev basukkah*
- Blessing for coming to this season: *Shehecheyanu*... sit and drink
- Wash hands, blessing over bread: *Netilat yadayim* and *motzi* – some people use honey instead of salt during the holiday. (See **Note** above)
- Eat
- *Birkat HaMazon* (add *Shir HaMa’a lot* and paragraphs for *Sukkot*)

Thursday Lunch, September 23rd, The First “Day” of Sukkot

- Daytime *Yom Tov* *Kiddush* (Called *Kiddusha Rabba L’Yom Tov* in some *Siddurim*)
- Blessing for dwelling in the *sukkah*: *Leyshev B’ Sukkah*
- Wash Hands: *Netilat Yadaim*
- Blessing for Bread: *HaMotzi*
- *Birkat HaMazon* (add *Shir HaMa’a lot* and paragraphs for *Sukkot*)
- [**Note:** some people “wash” (do *netilat yadayim*) before going out to recite *Kiddush* so they don’t have to go in and out of the *Sukkah*]

Thursday Evening, September 23rd The 2nd Night of Sukkot

- Set out a *Yahrzeit* candle (light one before sunset from an already existing flame so you will have a “utility flame” to use Friday night), or use the gas burner you turned on Wednesday afternoon.
- Light candles **after 8:04 using an existing flame** – such as a *Yahrzeit* candle
- Candle lighting in the *sukkah*, weather-permitting: *l’hadlik ner shel Yom Tov* and *Shehecheyanu*
- [**Note:** some people “wash” (do *netilat yadayim*) before going out to recite *Kiddush* so they don’t have to go in and out of the *Sukkah*]
- Blessing over wine: *Kiddush* (using the words and melody for the *Chagim*)
- Blessing for dwelling in the *sukkah*: *Leyshev basukkah*
- Blessing for coming to this season: *Shehecheyanu*... sit and drink
- Wash hands, blessing over bread: *Netilat yadayim* and *motzi* – some people use honey instead of salt during the holiday. (See **Note** above)
- Eat
- *Birkat HaMazon* (add *Shir HaMa’a lot* and paragraphs for *Sukkot*)

Friday Lunch, September 24th, The Second “Day” of Sukkot

- Daytime Yom Tov Kiddush (Called Kiddusha Rabba L'Yom Tov in some Siddurim)
- Blessing for dwelling in the *sukkah*: *Leyshev B'Sukkah*
- Wash Hands: *Netilat Yadaim*
- Blessing for Bread: *HaMotzi*
- *Birkat HaMazon* (add *Shir HaMa'a lot* and paragraphs for *Sukkot*)
- [Note: some people “wash” (do *netilat yadaim*) before going out to recite *Kiddush* so they don't have to go in and out of the *Sukkah*]

Friday Evening, September 24th, Shabbat Hol Hamoed Sukkot

- Light candles **before 7:00pm using an existing flame** – such as a *Yahrzeit* candle
- Eat in *Sukkah*
- Regular Friday night routine
- After reciting *Kiddush* sit and recite the *Leyshev B'Sukkah* blessing
- Add *Shir HaMa'a lot* and paragraphs for *Sukkot* and *Shabbat* to *Birkat HaMazon*

Saturday Lunch, September 25th, Shabbat Hol Hamoed Sukkot

- Eat in *Sukkah*
- Regular Shabbat lunch routine
- After reciting *Kiddush* sit and recite the *Leyshev B'Sukkah* blessing
- Add *Shir HaMa'a lot* and paragraphs for *Sukkot* and *Shabbat* to *Birkat HaMazon*

Wednesday Evening, September 29th – Erev Shemini Atzeret

- Set out a *Yahrzeit* candle (light one before sunset so you will have a “utility flame” to use on Thursday night). Another option is to leave a burner on your stovetop lit for the two days (keep a huge, covered pot of water over a low flame). You can add water on Thursday and Friday, but not on *Shabbat*.
- *Shemini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah* (in Israel these are combined into one day) are an “add on” to *Sukkot*; they are not really part of *Sukkot*. Because of this, there are no blessings related to *Sukkot*; some people only make *Kiddush* in the *Sukkah* but do not eat there.
- Light candles by **6:52pm** (light the “utility flame” first)
- Candle lighting in the *sukkah*, weather-permitting: *I'hadlik ner shel Yom Tov* and *Shehecheyanu*
- *Kiddush* (using the words and melody for the *Chagim*) in the *Sukkah*
- Blessing for coming to this season: *Shehecheyanu*
- Wash hands, blessing over bread: *Netilat yadayim* and *motzi*
- Eat
- *Birkat HaMazon* (add *Shir HaMa'a lot* and paragraphs for *Shemini Atzeret*)

Thursday Lunch September 30th – Shemini Atzeret Day

- Daytime Yom Tov Kiddush (Called *Kiddusha Rabba L'Yom Tov* in some Siddurim) in the *Sukkah*.
- Wash Hands: *Netilat Yadaim*
- Blessing for Bread: *HaMotzi*
- *Birkat HaMazon* (add *Shir HaMa'a lot* and paragraphs for *Shemini Atzeret*)

Thursday Evening, September 30th – Erev Simhat Torah

- Light candles **after 7:52pm** using an existing flame – such as a *Yahrzeit* candle
- Candle lighting: *I'hadlik ner shel Yom Tov* and *Shehecheyanu*
- *Kiddush* (using the words and melody for the *Chagim*) in the house
- Blessing for coming to this season: *Shehecheyanu*

- Wash hands, blessing over bread: *Netilat yadayim* and *motzi*
- *Eat*
- *Birkat HaMazon* (add *Shir HaMa'a lot* and paragraphs for *Simchat Torah*)

Friday Lunch October 1st – Simchat Torah Day

- Daytime *Yom Tov Kiddush* (Called *Kiddusha Rabba* in some *Siddurim*) in the house.
- Wash Hands: *Netilat Yadaim*
- Blessing for Bread: *HaMotzi*
- *Birkat HaMazon* (add *Shir HaMa'a lot* and paragraphs for *Simchat Torah*)

Friday Evening, October 1, Regular Shabbat

- Light candles *before 6:48pm using an existing flame* – such as a *Yahrzeit* candle
- Regular Friday night routine

Saturday Lunch, October 2, Regular Shabbat

- Regular Shabbat lunch routine

The texts for these prayers are found in most *siddurim*. The texts for candlelighting and *Kiddush* can be found on pages 718 and page 742 in *Siddur Sim Shalom*.

Special blessings for Sukkot

Candle Lighting

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו
במצותיו, וצונו להדליק נר של יום טוב.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us in His commandments and commanded us to kindle these festival day lights.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו
וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe Who has kept us alive, sustained us and enabled us to reach this day.



Blessing for taking the Arba Minim (four species)

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו
במצותיו, וצונו על נטילת לולב.

When taking the Arba Minim (four species) for the first time.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקיימנו
והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us concerning the taking of the the Lulav.

When taking the Arba Minim (four species) for the first time.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe Who has kept us alive, sustained us and enabled us to reach this day.



Kiddush

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי הגפן.
ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר בחר בנו מכל עם
ורוממנו מכל לשון, וקדשנו במצותיו. ותתן לנו יי אלהינו
באהבה מועדים לשמחה, חגים וזמנים לששון, את יום חג
השכות הזה, זמן שמחתנו מקרא קדש, זכר ליציאת מצרים. כי
בנו בחרת ואותנו קדשת מכל העמים, ומועדי קדשך בשמחה
ובששון הנחלתנו. ברוך אתה יי מקדש ישראל והזמנים.
ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו
לזמן הזה.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו
לישב בסוכה.

Blessed are You, God, King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has chosen us from every people, exalted us above every tongue, and sanctified us with His commandments. And You gave us, Lord, our God, with love, appointed festivals, for gladness, festivals and times for joy, this day of the Festival of Sukkot, the season of our gladness, it is for us a holy convocation, a memorial of the Exodus from Egypt. For You have chosen us and You have sanctified us above all the peoples and Your holy Festivals in gladness and in joy have You granted us as a heritage. Blessed are You, God, Who sanctifies Israel and the festive seasons.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe Who has kept us alive, sustained us and enabled us to reach this day.

Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has taught us the way of holiness through the Mitzvot and given us the Mitzvah to dwell in the Sukkah.



Sukkot Symbols

The Sukkah

The word Sukkah means, "booth".

It is a temporary shelter that is to remind us of the shelters used by the Jews during the time of the traveling in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt.

Some rules for building a Sukkah -

A Sukkah must be under 20 Amot (30-40 feet) and taller than 10 Tefachim (30-40 inches).

A Sukkah must have at least three walls.

When building your Sukkah, it should be built for that year's Sukkot (it is a temporary structure).

A Sukkah should not be built under a tree.

One should see more shade than sunlight through the Shchach (the covering made by leaves, often palm fronds or bamboo sticks).

One should be able to see the stars through the Schach.

Fourteen meals are supposed to be eaten in the Sukkah.

Many have a custom to sleep in the Sukkah.



The Lulav

The Lulav is the Palm branch that is part of the four species we shake on Sukkot.

According to different sources each species represents a different type of Jew or a different body part.

The Lulav comes from a palm tree which gives us dates that have a good taste but no smell. This represents the Jew who knows Torah but does not do Mitzvot.

The part of the body that it resembles is the spine.

The Four Species

The Etrog

The Etrog is a citron. It is similar to a large lemon in size, shape and color. It has a bitter taste. At the end of the Etrog is the Pitom. If the Pitom falls off, the Etrog is no longer Kosher (it no longer is valid for the service of shaking the four species).

The Etrog has a strong taste and smell. It represents the Jew who studies Torah and does Mitzvot.

The part of the body that it resembles is the heart.



The Hadas

The Hadas is the myrtle. The Hadas are small leaves on three branches. Many Hadas branches have berries on them that are picked off prior to being sold. If your Hadas has berries that outnumber the leaves, the berries can be picked off, except during Yom Tov (the first two days of Sukkot).

The Hadas has a pleasant smell but has no taste. It represents a Jew who does Mitzvot but does not know Torah.

The body part that a Hadas leaf resembles is an eye.



The Aravah

The Aravah is the willow. The Aravah branches are long and thin leaves on two branches. The Aravah branches are found near a brook (as opposed to other willow branches, which may be ragged looking). The Aravah has neither a taste or a smell. It represents a Jew who does no Mitzvot and knows no Torah.

The part of the body that Aravah resemble: are lips.



Putting it all together

Not until we put all four species together do we fulfill the Mitzvah. We hold them tightly together to signify that we need all types of Jews in order to have a community and that we need to use our entire body to serve God. If one of the pieces is missing, we have not fulfilled the Mitzvah, our community and our body are incomplete.