

# Celebrating Sukkot

Jewish Family Living – Holiday Celebrations at Home  
Congregation Beth El ♦ Bethesda, MD



## Z'man Simchateinu - The Season of our Joy

Sukkot begins on the eve of the 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei – just four days after the end of Yom Kippur. While it falls close to Yom Kippur in the Jewish calendar, it is remarkably different from it in both mood and content. Sukkot is the third in the cycle of three pilgrimage holidays (*shalosh regalim*), which includes Passover and Shavuot, and marks the end of the summer and ushers in the fall harvest.

Many people build Sukkot, סוכות, a Hebrew word meaning “booths” or “huts,” as Jewish tradition holds that the Israelites lived in similar temporary structures during their forty years of wandering through the wilderness of Sinai. It is also our link to nature and agriculture, as farmers in ancient Israel often lived in *sukkot* during the fall harvest period. Today, Jews invite guests into their *sukkot* to socialize and enjoy this joyous season.

## Home Guide for Celebrating Sukkot

Most of the more popular rituals of Sukkot are practiced at home. The following is a step-by-step guide for home observance of Sukkot. It includes information on traditional and symbolic foods to incorporate into your celebration of the holiday, prayers to add during meal times with your family, and some ideas for family activities during this festive time.

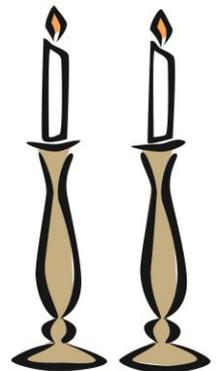
### The Order of the Home Service/Ritual

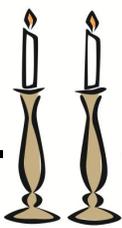
1. Lighting Candles
2. Family Blessings
3. Reciting Kiddush (sanctifying the day with a blessing over the wine)
4. Blessing for sitting in the *sukkah*
5. Washing Hands
6. Chanting Hamotzi (a blessing over the bread)
7. Blessing for the *lulav*
8. After the Meal

#### 1. Lighting Candles

The holiday celebration begins with the lighting of candles (*hadlakat nerot*), symbolizing the transition between profane and sacred time, much like the lighting of candles both at the beginning and end of *Shabbat*. Candles should be lit eighteen minutes before sunset on the first night of Sukkot. On the second night, candles should be lit one hour later than they were lit the previous night.

This blessing is the same as the blessing said over the candles on Friday night except for the last words. On Shabbat you include the words in the parentheses.





## BLESSING OVER THE CANDLES

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam,  
Asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav,  
V'tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel (Shabbat v'shel)  
Yom Tov.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְהַדְלִיק  
וְצִוָּנוּ נֵר שֶׁל (שַׁבָּת וְשֶׁל) יוֹם טוֹב.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe whose mitzvot add holiness to our lives and who gave us the mitzvah to kindle lights for (Shabbat and for) the Festival.

After lighting the candles, you say **Shehecheyanu** to thank God for enabling us to reach this season.

## SHEHECHEYANU

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam,  
Shehecheyanu v'kimanu v'higi-anu laz'man  
hazeh.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
שֶׁהַחַיֵּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, for keeping us alive, for sustaining us, and for helping us to reach this season.

## 2. Family Blessings

If children are present, it is tradition for the parents to place their hands on the children's heads and recite the blessings below (followed by hugs and kisses).

*For boys:*

*Y'simcha Elohim k'Ephrayim v'chiM'nasheh.*

May God inspire you to live in the tradition of Ephraim and Menasheh, who carried forward the life of our people.

יִשְׁמַח אֱלֹהִים בְּאַפְרַיִם וּבְמְנַשֶּׁה.

*For girls:*

*Y'simeich Elohim k'Sarah, Rivkah, Lei-ah, v'Rachel.*

May God inspire you to live in the tradition of Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel, who carried forward the life of our people.

יִשְׁמַח אֱלֹהִים בְּשָׂרָה, רִבְקָה, רָחֵל וְלֵאָה.

*For both:*

*Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'recha.*

*Ya-eir Adonai panav eilecha viychuneka.*

*Yisah Adonai panav eilecha v'yaseim l'cha shalom.*

May God bless you and keep you.

May God look kindly upon you, and be gracious to you.

May God reach out to you in tenderness and give you peace.

*(If you choose, add personal thoughts and blessings)*

יְבָרַךְ יְהוָה וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ.  
יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיַחַנֶּךָ.  
יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וְשָׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם.

### 3. Reciting Kiddush

We sanctify the holiday by reciting the special *kiddush* (blessing over wine) for Sukkot. There are three parts to the *kiddush*. When Sukkot falls on Friday evening, we include the first paragraph, the *Vayechulu*, which comes from the Torah. The next part is the daily blessing over the wine or juice. The third piece, the Kiddush is the longer blessing sanctifying the festival (and Shabbat) and reminds us of creation and the Exodus from Egypt. As with all other festivals, it is traditional to recite the *shehecheyanu* prayer again after the *kiddush* and before drinking.

#### VAYECHULU (only on Shabbat)

The sixth day –  
The heavens and the earth, and all within them,  
were finished. By the seventh day, God had  
completed the work which He had been doing; and  
so God rested from all his work. Then God blessed  
the seventh day and sanctified it because on it He  
rested from all the work of His creation.

וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם  
וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צְבָאָם : וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי  
מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי  
מְכַל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יוֹם  
הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּו שָׁבַת מְכַל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ  
אֲשֶׁר-בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת:

#### BLESSING OVER THE WINE

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam,  
Borei p'ri hagafen.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fruit of the vine.

#### KIDDUSH

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam,  
asher bachar banu mikol am  
v'rom'manu mikol lashon, v'kid'shanu  
b'mitzvotav. Va-teeten lanu Adonai Eloheinu  
b'ahavah (Shabbatot lim'nucha u)  
Moadim l'simcha, chagim uz'manim l'sason, et  
Yom (haShabbat hazeh v'et yom) chag hasukot  
hazeh, z'man simchateinu (b'ahava) mikro  
kodesh zeicher l'tziat mitzrayim. Ki vanu  
vacharta v'otanu kidashta mikol ha'amim,  
(v'Shabbat) uMoadei kod-sh'cha (b'ahava  
uvratzon) b'simcha uv'sason hinchaltanu.  
Baruch atah Adonai, m'kadeish (haShabbat v')  
Yisrael v'hazmanim*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל עַם וְרוֹמַמְנוּ  
מִכָּל לָשׁוֹן, וְקִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו.  
וַתִּתֵּן לָנוּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה  
(שָׁבָתוֹת לְמִנוּחָה וּמוֹעֲדִים  
לְשִׂמְחָה, חַגִּים וְזִמְנִים לְשָׂשׂוֹן,  
אֶת-יוֹם (הַשָּׁבַת הַזֶּה וְאֶת-יוֹם)  
חַג הַסּוּכּוֹת הַזֶּה, זִמְנוֹ שִׂמְחָתֵנוּ, (בְּאַהֲבָה),  
מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ זִכָּר לְיִצְיַאת מִצְרָיִם.  
כִּי בָנוּ בְּחַרְתָּ, וְאוֹתָנוּ קִדְּשָׁתָּ  
מִכָּל הָעַמִּים, (וְשָׁבַת) וּמוֹעֲדֵי קֹדֶשׁ  
(בְּאַהֲבָה וּבְרָצוֹן) בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְשָׂשׂוֹן  
הִנְחַלְתָּנוּ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי מְקַדֵּשׁ  
(הַשָּׁבַת וְ) יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַזְּמַנִּים.

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Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe who has chosen and distinguished us by sanctifying our lives with Commandments. In love have You given us, O'Lord our God, (Sabbaths for rest) appointed times for gladness, festivals and season for joy, even (this Sabbath day and) this Festival of Sukkot, the season of our gladness. It is for us (in love) a holy convocation, commemorating the Exodus from Egypt. You have chosen us of all peoples for your service, and You have given us a sacred purpose in life. Therefore you gave us (with loving favor) in gladness and joy, Your holy (Shabbat and) festivals as a heritage. Praise are You, O God, who hallows (the Shabbat,) Israel, and the festivals.

### SHEHECHEYANU

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam,  
Shehecheyanu v'kimanu v'higi-anu laz'man  
hazeh.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, for keeping us alive, for sustaining us, and for helping us to reach this season.

#### 4. Blessing for Sitting in the Sukkah

After reciting *kiddush*, if you are sitting in the *sukkah*, you recite the following blessing.



### BLESSING FOR SITTING IN THE SUKKAH

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam,  
Asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, V'tzivanu lei-shev  
ba-sukkah.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתַיִךְ, וְצִוִּינוּ לֵישֵׁב בַּסֻּכָּה.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us to dwell in the sukkah.

#### 5. Washing Hands

The ritual washing of hands has nothing to do with physical cleanliness. While the hands are obviously to be clean of dirt before food is eaten, even hands that are physically clean should be ritually washed before sitting down to eat.

### BLESSING FOR WASHING THE HANDS

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech  
ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav  
vtzvivanu al n'tilat yadayim.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתַיִךְ וְצִוִּינוּ עַל  
נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

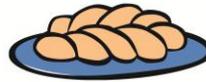
Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe,  
who has sanctified us with commandments and has commanded us to wash our hands.



## 6. Chanting HaMotzi

Before eating dinner we recite *HaMotzi*, the blessing over bread. Just like on Shabbat, we say this blessing over challah.

### HAMOTZI



*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam,  
Hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe,  
Who brings forth bread from the earth.

## 7. Blessing for the Lulav

One of the ways in which we express our joy on Sukkot is by blessing and waving the *lulav* and *etrog*. The *lulav* contains four different species of plants mentioned in the Torah, which grow in *Eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel, and are used in the celebration of Sukkot. They are the *etrog* (citron), *lulav* (date palm), *hadass* (myrtle), and *aravah* (willow), and are held together by a woven palm branch. When we recite the blessing over the *lulav* and *etrog*, we hold them together – the *lulav* in your right hand with the spine facing you and the *etrog*, with the pith (stem) facing down, in your left hand – and wave them in six directions – north, south, east, west, up, and down – in order to symbolize that we can find God and God’s blessings in any direction we turn.



### BLESSING FOR THE LULAV

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam,  
asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav vtzvivanu al n'tilat  
lulav.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל  
נְטִילַת לולָב.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe,  
who has sanctified us with commandments and has commanded us to wave the lulav.

## 7. After the Meal

After dinner is finished you may choose to recite *Birkat HaMazon*, the grace after meals, which can be found in *Siddur Sim Shalom* beginning on page 754. Make sure to include the paragraphs for Sukkot and Shabbat (if Sukkot falls on Shabbat).

It is a custom from our mystical tradition to welcome our revered ancestors as guests (“ushpizin”) to our sukkot each night. For specifics on this ritual, please refer to *Siddur Sim Shalom*, pages 330 – 333.

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES FOR SUKKOT



### BEFORE THE HOLIDAY BEGINS:

- ☆ It is a *mitzvah* (commandment) to build a sukkah for Sukkot. There are many guides on the internet on how to build a DIY (do-it-yourself) sukkah – check out the holiday page on the Beth El website ([www.bethelmc.org](http://www.bethelmc.org)) for information on design plans for a sukkah or links to a kit you can purchase online.
- ☆ Decorate your *sukkah*! There are so many different ways to make your *sukkah* festive and original. Be creative – hang dried gourds, Indian corn, and pumpkins, drape the walls with chains made of paper (and make them even more special by decorating each link with a picture, glitter, or something fun), and create special pictures representing *ushpizin*, harvest themes, and friends sitting in a sukkah together. If you don't have a *sukkah* at your home, bring decorations to a friend's *sukkah* or another in the community.
- ☆ Create a welcome banner for the entrance to your *Sukkah*. It is a tradition to invite guests to sit and dwell in your *sukkah* (usually by eating a meal), so invite friends over to share a meal with your family and make a festive banner to make them feel welcome!
- ☆ Get ready for your holiday meal by creating dishes that are made with fruits and vegetables that we typically find during the fall season.

### AT YOUR HOLIDAY TABLE:

- ☆ There is a Jewish mystical tradition of inviting seven biblical guests into the sukkah. Traditionally, these *ushpizin*, guests, were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and David. More contemporary traditions now include significant women on this guest list: Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, and Ruth. Discuss as a family why these names are included on traditional guest lists. Ask your children whom they would like to invite into the sukkah and have them share the reasons for their choices. Encourage them to think broadly and include historical figures, family members, friends, and anyone of interest or importance in their lives.

### OTHER HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES:

- ☆ For an additional *mitzvah* and to incorporate themes of *Tikkun Olam* into your holiday celebration, collect canned and boxed food throughout the holiday and donate it to a local food pantry once the holiday is over, or make a contribution to an organization that works to end hunger, like Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger.
- ☆ Read fun Sukkot stories as a family. Some favorites:
  - [Sammy Spider's First Sukkot](#) by Sylvia A. Rouss
  - [Tamar's Sukkah](#) by Ellie Gellman
  - [It's Sukkah Time!](#) By Latifa Berry Kropf
  - [Bubbe Isabella and the Sukkot Cake](#) by Kelly Terwilliger
  - [The Mysterious Guests: A Sukkot Story](#) by Eric A. Kimmel

This guide was prepared by Elisha Rothschild Frumkin, Family Education Director at Congregation Beth El, with help from: [The Jewish Family Fun Book](#) by Danielle Dardashti and Roni Sarig, [www.myjewishlearning.com](http://www.myjewishlearning.com), and [Teaching Jewish Holidays](#) by Robert Goodman. Prayer excerpts are from [Siddur Sim Shalom](#) and [B'kol Echad](#) published by the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.