

SUKKOT

Sep 25-Oct 2, 2026

Sukkot begins at 6:51 pm on Friday, Sep 25. YomTov concludes at 7:50 pm on Saturday, Sep 26, while Sukkot continues until Friday, Oct 2.

All times displayed in this guide are for the Greater Toronto Area.

WHAT IS SUKKOT?

Sukkot is a seven-day celebration of the harvest season, and commemorates the miraculous protection G-d provided for the Israelites during the Exodus from Egypt and the forty years in the desert wilderness.



THE IMMERSIVE MITZVAH

"Mitzvah," the Torah's word for the divine precepts which guide and govern every aspect of our daily lives has a dual meaning: the word means both "commandment" and "connection."

In commanding us the mitzvot, G-d created the means through which we may establish a connection with Him. The hand that distributes charity, the mind that ponders the wisdom of Torah, the heart that soars in prayer — all become instruments of the divine will. There are mitzvot for each limb, organ and faculty of man, and mitzvot governing every area of life, so that no part of us remains uninvolved in our relationship with the Creator.

Therein lies the uniqueness of the mitzvah of sukkah. While other mitzvot each address a certain aspect of our persona, the mitzvah of sukkah provides a medium by which the totality of man is engaged in the fulfillment of G-d's will. All of the person enters into and lives in the sukkah. "Sukkah is the only mitzvah into which a person enters with his muddy boots," goes the Chassidic saying. For the seven days of Sukkot, the sukkah is our home—the environment for our every endeavor and activity.

① Learn more at jrcc.org/Sukkot

SUKKAH IN THE RAIN?

The weather may be a little unpleasant, it may be a little squishy in there, and your palm allergy may be flaring up...but the inner serenity, the love and feeling of connection with those around you, the sense of being embraced by G-d—all that should override any physical discomfort. If you're still not enjoying the sukkah, then you're not really in the sukkah in the first place, and you can go back inside the home. But if you know what you're missing, you won't want to leave.

There are moments when we are called upon to transcend the natural world. Sitting in the sukkah is one of those moments. A little rain, or even a lot, can't stop that.



SPECIAL GUESTS

According to Kabbalistic tradition, we are visited in the sukkah by seven supernal ushpizin ("guests") – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David. On each of the seven days of the festival, another of the seven ushpizin (in the above order) leads the group. The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn (1880-1950) spoke of seven "chassidic ushpizin" as well: the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid of Mezeritch, and the first five rebbes of Chabad.

The Rebbe would speak each night of Sukkot on the special characteristics of both the biblical and the chassidic ushpizin of the day and their connection to each other and their specific day of the festival.



WE'RE HERE TO HELP

For assistance in making your Sukkot plans, including attending services, building a Sukkah, acquiring a lulav and etrog, or any other assistance, visit jrcc.org/Sukkot or contact the JRCC.



IT TAKES ALL KINDS

The etrog has both a taste and an aroma; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who have both Torah learning and good deeds... The date (the fruit of the lulav) has a taste but does not have an aroma; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who have Torah but do not have good deeds... The hadas has an aroma but not a taste; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who have good deeds but do not have Torah.... The aravah has no taste and no aroma; so, too, do the people of Israel include individuals who do not have Torah and do not have good deeds.... Says G-d: "Let them all bond together in one bundle and atone for each other."

The message is not just that "all are part of the Jewish people" or "all are precious in the eyes of G-d" or even that "all are necessary"; it says that they "all atone for each other." This implies that each of the Four Kinds possesses something that the other three do not, and thus "atones" and compensates for that quality's absence in the other three.



THE INTERMEDIATE DAYS

Chol Hamoed (the "intermediate days") are, as the name suggests, a fusion of the mundane ("chol) and the sacred ("moed"). These are not holy days like Shabbat and Yom Tov during which work is prohibited, yet they are still festival days that are observed with limited work restrictions. The general principle is to minimize work and to maximize the holiday celebration. Anything done to cook or otherwise celebrate the festival itself is generally permitted. Driving, lights and using electronics is permitted (but you might want to minimize screen time to be more present with the holiday), and one can do work in order to avoid incurring a loss. Consult your rabbi from more specifics.

The seventh and final official day of Sukkot is called Hoshana Rabbah, and is considered the final day of the divine "judgment" in which the fate of the new year is determined. It is the day when the verdict that was issued on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is finalized.



SHAKE THE FOUR KINDS

It is customary to perform the mitzvah of the Four Kinds inside the Sukkah.

1. Blessing. Stand facing east. Hold the lulav in your right hand and recite the blessing: **Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-olam a-sher ki-de-sha-nu be-mitz-vo-tav ve-tzee-vah-nu al ne-ti-lat lu-lav.**

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us regarding taking the lulav.

2. Pick up the etrog in your left hand.

The following blessing is recited ONLY on the first time the mitzvah is performed this year:

Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu me-lech ha-olam she-heche-ya-nu ve-ki-yi-ma-nu ve-higi-a-nu liz-man ha-zeh.

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

3. Shake it Up (and all around)

Bring the lulav and etrog together using both hands. The bottom of all the Four Kinds should be parallel, with the top of the etrog touching the lulav. Your hands should be opposite your heart. Wave the Four Kinds three times in each direction, bringing them back to the heart after each time:

- Right (south)
- Left (north)
- Straight (east)
- Upwards - beware of low ceilings!
- Downwards - keep the tip pointing up and move your hands downward
- Backwards (west) - keep your feet planted, twist backwards to the right



THE MOSHIACH CONNECTION

The sukkah is defined as a temporary dwelling which, for the duration of the seven-day festival of Sukkot, becomes the home of the Jew. The sukkah must be "temporary" but it also must be a "dwelling," therefore the sukkah has a minimum height, length and width, a maximum height, and many other detailed laws defining its building. All these specifications have one exception: there is no limit to a sukkah's length and breadth. You can build a sukkah the size of a city, or the size of a continent — it'll still be a kosher sukkah. The Talmud derives from the verse "all citizens of Israel shall dwell in the sukkah" that the Torah wishes to imply that "it is fitting that the entire people of Israel dwell in a single sukkah."

The quality imparted by Sukkot is unity. Our interdependence and oneness as a people are expressed by the four kinds taken on Sukkot, and by the sukkah's embrace of every Jew — every type of Jew, and every individual Jew — within its walls.

Thus, it is indeed most "fitting that the entire people of Israel dwell in a single sukkah." The big sukkah — the sukkah large enough to house all Jews together — cannot be a violation of the definition of "sukkah", since it is actually its most fitting expression. Whatever size sukkah we build, we must ensure that it should be a "big sukkah" in essence — a welcome home to each and every one of our brethren.

① Learn more at jrcc.org/Moshiach