



BUILDING AND EATING IN THE SUKKAH

Choosing a site

Before you build a Sukkah, select a land site that has nothing hanging above, i.e. a roof or branches from trees. The Sukkah floor must be a minimum of 27 by 27 inches 967 cm - it's the bare minimum space for most of a person to sit with a small table. Balconies are fine assuming it has no roof above.

The Sukkah Walls

For a Sukkah to be valid, it must involve at least two complete walls and a small part of a third wall (You can use the side of buildings, or an area that is already enclosed by 2 + or 3 walls). The walls can be of any type, as long as they are well-built to hold out a typical wind. The walls should be at least 38 inches high (96 cm), but not higher than 30 feet (9.6 m).

The Sukkah Roof

The roof requires material that were only grown from the ground - i.e. branches or leaves (not metal, or any food). If you're using unfinished boards, they cannot be wider than 15 inches. The material must be detached from the ground before placing on the roof - i.e. can't bend a branch over the top of the Sukkah. The roof material can only be added after the requisite numbers of walls are in place.

The Sukkah roof must be sufficiently covered so that it gives more shade than sun during the daytime. Yet it should be somewhat open so that the stars are visible through the roof at night.

As the Sukkah is called your "home" for the next week, it is customary to hang pretty decoration. Many people hang posters of Jewish themes.

When it rains, you shall eat indoors, however the first night & day is the most important time to eat in the Sukkah. Thus one should try to hang around for some time for the rain to stop, to be able to make the blessing and eat in the Sukkah.

Whenever we sit in the Sukkah and eat food made of grain, besides the ordinary blessings we say the following blessing:

English:	Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who sanctified us with His mitzvot, and instructed us to sit in the Sukkah.
Phonetic Hebrew:	Baruch ata Adonoy, Elo-heinu Melech ha'olam, asher kid'shanu bi'mitzvo-sav, vi'tzivanu lay-shave ba-sukkah.
Hebrew:	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לֵישֵׁב בַּסֻּכָּה.

On the first evening of Sukkot, we add the following blessing.

English:	Blessed are You, the Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.
Phonetic Hebrew:	Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam, she-he-choyanu v'kimanu v'higianu laz'man ha-zeh
Hebrew:	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחַיֵּנוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

Basted on kabalistic teachings, when Jews spend time in the Sukkah, Gods spending His time there. It is as if the Almighty has invited us to enter His holy palace and to sit at His table and share in His goodness. Perhaps this is why Sukkah is one of the few good-deeds we perform with our entire body. We are literally immersed and bathed in the spiritual energy. Look over your head and see the sky allowing, as it were, heaven to descend through your ceiling and infuse your Sukkah.

The Talmud says that in the days of the Messiah, all Jews will dwell together in one gigantic Sukkah. This underscores the need for Jewish unity. Perhaps this is the reason why on Sukkot we take the four species -- Etrog, Lulav, myrtle and willow -- bind them close together, and wave them in all directions. We declare that all Jews are part of the same unit. And we pledge to discover how all these parts can work together to accomplish our lofty goals.

We hope you enjoy your Sukkah. Have a few meals, shmuze, snooze -- and learn a little Torah. Bring out your nice dishes and relish in the splendor. Because for one entire week, this is the house where you and your Creator will dwell together.