

Sukkot

What is Sukkot?

'Sukkah' is the Hebrew word for 'booth' or 'tabernacle'. 'Sukkot', the plural, is the name of the festival of booths. Sukkah were the huts in which the Jewish people lived during their years in the desert after they left slavery in Egypt and before they arrived in the Promised Land (Israel).

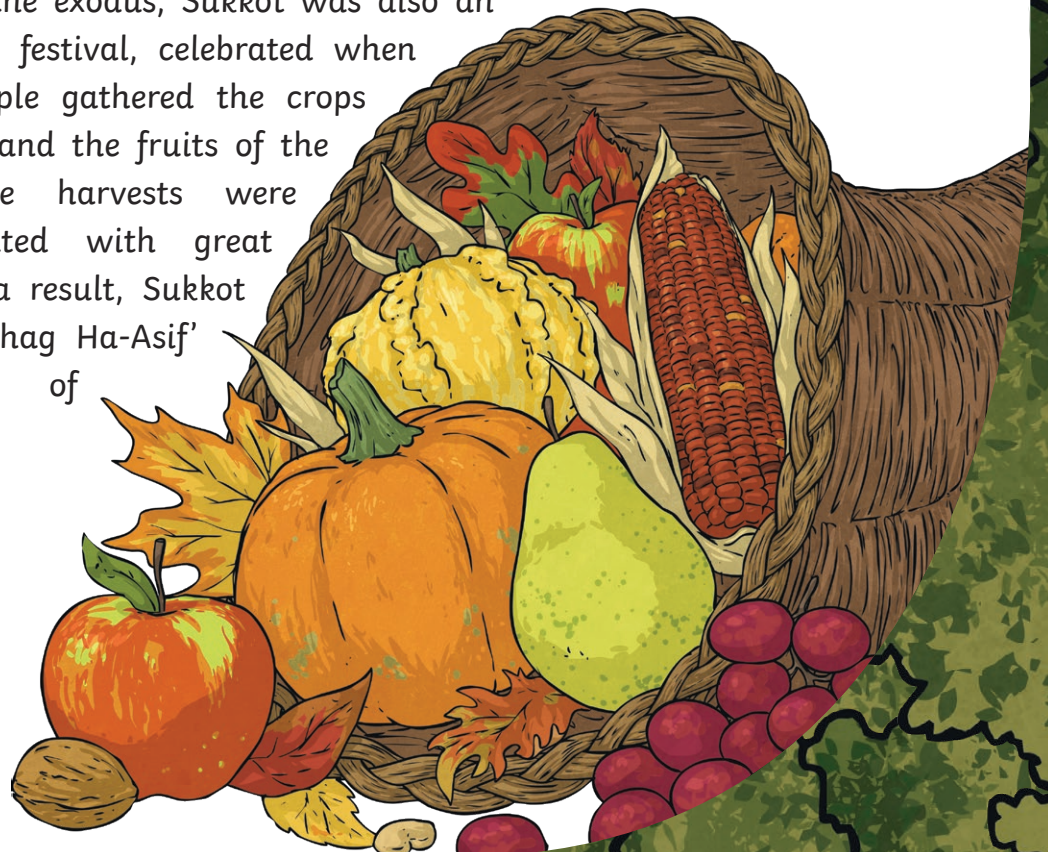


Sukkot comes at the end of the High Holidays, which are the most serious days of the Jewish year. Sukkot is a joyful festival and one of the Three Pilgrim Festivals.

The Story of Sukkot

During Sukkot Jews remember when God freed them from slavery in Egypt. When the Jewish people left Egypt, in 1446 BC, they wandered for forty years in the desert before they reached the Promised Land of Israel. Along their way, they built temporary homes out of dry palms and branches. During Sukkot, Jewish people 'live' for seven days in huts made from branches and palms, to remind them of their journey and how they relied on God to help them.

At the time of the exodus, Sukkot was also an autumn harvest festival, celebrated when the Jewish people gathered the crops from the fields and the fruits of the orchards. These harvests were always celebrated with great excitement. As a result, Sukkot is also called, 'Chag Ha-Asif' ('The Festival of Gathering').



How is Sukkot Celebrated?

Building a sukkah

A sukkah must meet the following criteria:

A sukkah must have at least three walls. The walls of the sukkah can be made out of anything: canvas, wood, bricks, even metal or stone.

The roof must be made out of something, which grew from the ground (e.g. branches are allowed, plastic or metal is not).

The roof material it is made from must no longer be connected to the ground. e.g. you may not use a living branch as part of the sukkah roof - it must be cut off the tree before it may be used.

It must be possible to see at least 3 stars in the night sky through the sukkah roof (it must not be such a good roof that it protects us totally from the environment - instead, we need to still have some trust that God will continue to protect us).



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Living in a Sukkah

Jewish people 'live' in a sukkah for the whole week of Sukkot. This means that they try to eat all their meals in the sukkah and say the blessings for bread, wine, and a prayer that thanks God. Some people, especially men, also sleep in the sukkah.

During Sukkot guests are invited over to eat in the sukkah. Jews also imagine that seven special guests, known as the Ushpizin, join them in the sukkah. These guests are the Biblical characters Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David.

The Four Species

On Sukkot, four kinds of plants, known in Hebrew as the Arbah Minim (literally, the 'four species,' are bound together and waved to represent a Jew's service of God. They represent the oneness of Israel, and the harvest. They are:

Aravah - willows that have no fruit and no fragrance.

Lulav - palm branch that has no fragrance, but has fruit, which can be eaten.

Etrog - citron, a fruit like a lemon, that has a sweet fragrance and can be eaten.

Hadassim - myrtles that have a nice smell but cannot be eaten.



The three myrtle twigs and the two willows are tied together to the palm branch. This bouquet is called the lulav.

Questions

1. What does 'Sukkah' mean in Hebrew?

2. What are sukkah?

3. When is Sukkot?

4. What do Jews remember at Sukkot?

5. What materials were used to build the original sukkah?

6. How do modern Jewish people commemorate the journey of their ancestors?

7. What is Sukkot also known as?

8. What considerations must be made with regards to the material use to build the roof of the sukkah?

9. Why must 3 stars be able to be seen through the roof of a sukkah?

10. What activities take place in the sukkah?

11. Which people usually sleep in the sukkah?

12. How many imaginary guests are invited to the sukkah?

13. What tradition is used to represent a Jew's service to God.

Answers

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'Sukkah' is the Hebrew word for 'booth' or 'tabernacle'.

2. What are sukkah?

Sukkah were the huts in which the Jewish people lived during their years in the desert after they left slavery in Egypt and before they arrived in the Promised Land (Israel).

3. When is Sukkot?

Sukkot comes at the end of the High Holydays.

4. What do Jews remember at Sukkot?

Jews remember when God freed them from slavery in Egypt.

5. What materials were used to build the original sukkah?

Dry palms and branches.

6. How do modern Jewish people commemorate the journey of their ancestors?

Jewish people 'live' for seven days in huts made from branches and palms.

7. What is Sukkot also known as?

Sukkot is also called, 'Chag Ha-Asif' ('The Festival of Gathering').

8. What considerations must be made with regards to the material use to build the roof of the sukkah?

The roof must be made out of something, which grew from the ground but must be no longer connected to the ground.

9. Why must 3 stars be able to be seen through the roof of a sukkah?

To trust that God will continue to protect us.

10. What activities take place in the sukkah?

Eating of meals, saying blessings for bread, wine, and prayer.

11. Which people usually sleep in the sukkah?

Men.

12. How many imaginary guests are invited to the sukkah?

Seven.

13. What tradition is used to represent a Jews service to God.

The 'four species,' are bound together and waved.