

**Sukkot** is one of Judaism's three pilgrimage festivals—*Shalosh Regalim* (Passover, *Shavuot*, *Sukkot*). When the Temple stood in Jerusalem, Jews journeyed there to offer special prayers and sacrifices. Today, we build and gather in temporary dwellings (**Sukkot**) that meet certain construction requirements, most notably, the ability to see the starry night sky through the branches that are used for the roof.

**Sukkot** represent the temporary structures that the Israelites erected in the Sinai Desert as well as the huts that farmers would construct in their fields during the harvest season in Ancient Israel. By eating meals, welcoming guests, and even sleeping in the **Sukkah** (singular of **Sukkot**), we reconnect with the desert origins of the Jewish people and reaffirm our connections with Mother Nature and the Land of Israel.

Because **Sukkot** focuses our attention on nature, our ancestors, and God's love and care for us, it is called by another name: **Zman Simchateinu** (The Season of our Rejoicing).

The blessings below are meant to be recited during the holiday of Sukkot. Each blessing is prefaced with a **Kavanah** (intention).

### We gather in the Sukkah *Leishev Ba'Sukkah*



Intention-- Sitting here, in this Sukkah, we take a moment to think about the ways in which we find shelter and offer shelter to others. In addition to physical shelter, we reflect on the emotional and spiritual aspects of shelter, which enable us to feel the love and care that truly shelter us as we journey through life.

*Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech  
Ha'olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav  
v'tzivanu leishev ba'sukkah.*

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

**Blessed are You, Source of Life, for inviting us to enrich our lives  
by finding shelter in this Sukkah.**

### We shake the Lulav *Netilat Lulav*



Intention-- The lulav and etrog are laden with many different layers of symbolism. Common to all the different interpretations of what these items from the natural world represent is the fact that when all 4 species (palm, citron, willow, myrtle) are held together, they represent a kind of mystical unification. Whether it's the unification of the Jewish people, humanity and the natural world, or different aspects of the individual human being, this unification transforms the four species of the lulav into a source of great power and mystery.

ReformJudaism.org offers the following instructions for how to shake the lulav-- The lulav is held up in the right hand, and the etrog is held pitom end (pointy side) down in the left hand. Facing east, recite the blessing. Then turn the etrog up and shake the entire bundle three times in each of six directions: straight ahead, right, back, left, up, and down.

*Baruch Atah Adonai,  
Eloheinu Melech Ha'olam,  
asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al netilat lulav.*

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

**Blessed are You, Source of Life, for uniting us through the ancient tradition  
of shaking the lulav.**



## We call attention to this sacred moment *Shehecheyanu*

We recite these words as a way of cultivating loving awareness in the present moment.



*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh.*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהֵחֵינּוּ  
וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעֵנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה.

Blessed are You, Source of Life, for giving us life, sustaining us in life, and bringing us to this sacred moment.

## Come One, Come All *Hachnasat Orchim and Ushpizin*

In the Middle East, hospitality is a sacred tradition shared by all cultures. One of the first things we learn about Abraham and Sarah, the father and mother of the Jewish people, is that they graciously and proactively welcomed strangers to their tent. We honor their example and connect ourselves with this sacred tradition when we welcome guests to our homes and to our *Sukkah*. The Hebrew phrase, ***Hachnasat Orchim***, means “welcoming guests” and it evokes the paradigm set for us by Abraham and Sarah. To truly live our values, we must open our homes to friends, family, and community. Welcoming guests allows us to share our bounty with others and it invites others to enrich our lives through their unique gifts, identities, and stories.

In addition to welcoming physical guests into our lives, *Sukkot* encourages us to welcome spiritual guests called ***Ushpizin***. ***Ushpizin*** is the Aramaic word for “guests” (fun fact— Aramaic was the spoken language of Jews for more than 1,000 years!). While traditional ***ushpizin*** include the larger than life heroes of the Torah and Jewish tradition, the concept of ***ushpizin*** may be extended to include cherished members of our family tree as well as spiritual heroes and role models of all faiths and backgrounds.

