

At Home With G-d

Readings for Sukkot

First Day

Tishrei 15, 5787

September 26, 2026

Second Day

Tishrei 16, 5787

September 27, 2026

Torah Readings Day 1&2

First Torah: Leviticus 22:26-23:44

Second Torah: Numbers 29:12-16

Zachariah 14:1-21

Kings I 8:2-21

Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzah for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

The Torah commands, "For seven days you shall dwell in sukkos." In defining this Mitzva, our Sages state, "You must live [in the sukkah] just as you live [in your home]." For the seven days of the holiday, all the daily routines of our life must be carried out in the Sukka. As our Sages explain: "For all of these seven days, one should consider the sukkah as one's permanent dwelling, and one's home as temporary.... A person should eat, drink, relax... and study in the sukkah."

Our Sages point out that "the mitzvot were given for the sole purpose of refining the created beings": by observing a mitzvah a person elevates himself and his surrounding environment. Most Mitzvos are focused only on limited aspects of our being and limited dimensions of our environment. When putting on tefillin one elevates one's head, heart, and arm, as well as the actual leather artifacts involved. When, by contrast, a person lives in a sukkah, his entire body is enveloped by the mitzvah: even the most mundane aspects of his life become means of connection to G-d.

The message of the mitzvah of sukkah is not self-contained; it influences our conduct throughout the entire year to come. The Torah simply tells us to "know Him in all your ways"; and our Sages comment, "This is a short verse upon which all the fundamentals of the Torah depend." For G-dliness is present not merely in the synagogue or in the house of study, but in every dimension and corner of our lives. This concept is made tangible by the mitzvah of dwelling in a sukkah.

The sukkah represents a deeper fusion between materiality and spirituality than that which is achieved through the performance of many other mitzvot. In most instances, the connection between the material object and the spiritual effect established through the observance of a mitzvah does not permeate the material entity entirely. Therefore, though we are required to treat them with respect, these objects are not considered holy; they are not totally united with spirituality. Consecration implies that the physical entity becomes suffused with holiness, and this deeper bond is achieved through the mitzvah of dwelling in the sukkah. When you choose to believe despite the viable, easy, and rational justifications, then you're a *true* believer. When you choose to look under the hood of familiarity and see the incognito hand of G-d, then you *really* believe.

Based on Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

The Easy Mitzvah

The specialty of the sukkah as an all-embracing medium of connection with G-d is best understood in light of the significance of the "home" to the human being.

Our sages point out how deeply rooted man's desire for a home is. The desire for a home is much more than the need for shelter and security, the satisfaction of these needs alone, without a plot of land to call one's own, does not satisfy the craving for a home. The Talmud goes so far as to say that "One who does not possess a homestead is not a man." The need for a home is intrinsic to the soul of man and a defining aspect of the human state.

Thus, a person's identification with his home is not confined to the hours he spends within its walls. Also when he is at work, visiting with friends or taking a stroll in the park, it is as the owner of this particular home that he works, visits or strolls. Since his very humanity is incomplete without it, it is part and parcel of everything he does. For the seven days that we make the sukkah our home, it comes to form an integral part of our identity. Everything we do, including what we do outside of the sukkah, is included in the "connection" with G-d achieved by this mitzvah.

A person can approach the fulfillment of G-d's commandments in one of two ways:

- As a duty.* Such an individual sees the purpose of his life in the realization of his own personal ambitions. At the same time, he recognizes that G-d is the master of the universe and is the one who created him, granted him life, and continues to sustain him in every moment of his existence. So he feels duty-bound to obey G-d's commandments.
- As the purpose of his existence.* This individual understands that "I was not created, but to serve my Creator." He recognizes this as his true "I" and as the ultimate fulfillment and realization of who and what he is.

If we assume the first approach, regarding the observance of a mitzvah as a duty, there will be both "difficult" and "easy" mitzvot. We might fulfill them all, perhaps even willingly and joyfully, but some will be more pleasant and inspiring, others more tedious and toilsome. The expenditure of time, effort or money that a mitzvah requires will also affect the degree of difficulty we experience in its fulfillment.

But when we see the fulfillment of the divine will as the very stuff of our life, the concept of a difficult mitzvah is nonexistent. All mitzvot are "easy," for they do not constitute an imposition on our life—they are our life. Indeed, there will be no division between the mitzvah and "non-mitzvah" areas of our life. When we live to implement G-d's purpose in creation, our entire life—including those activities which are not explicit mitzvah acts—becomes a single, seamless quest to connect to our Creator and serve His will.

If all mitzvot could be observed in either of the above ways, there is one mitzvah whose terms of observance call for nothing less than the second approach. The mitzvah of sukkah does not tell us to do something; it tells us to *be* something—a sukkah-dweller. The way to observe this mitzvah is to make the sukkah our home—our environment, our roots, our very identity—for seven days of each year of our life.

And when we apply the model of the mitzvah of sukkah to our observance of all of G-d's commandments, they, too, assume the all-embracing quality of the sukkah. They, too, become as "easy" as life.

Based on Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Sacred material please do not desecrate

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The Joy of Giving

Sukkot is the festival that celebrates Jewish unity. Unity is the underlying theme of the festival's three precepts: joy, the taking of the Four Kinds, and dwelling in the *sukkah*.

All of the festivals are referred to as "occasions for joy" (*mo'adim lesimchah*), but the Torah stresses the centrality of joy to the festival of Sukkot more than with any other festival. Thus, only the festival of Sukkot is defined, in our prayers of the day, as *zeman simchateinu*, "The Time of Our Joy." (Passover is subtitled "The Time of Our Freedom," and Shavuot, "The Time of the Giving of Our Torah.") Indeed, there is a unique joy associated with Sukkot—a joy that reaches its height in the nightly "water-drawing" celebration held during the festival.

And joy, for the Jew, is an exercise in empathy and communal concern. "You shall rejoice on your festival," enjoins the Torah, "you, your son, your daughter, your servant, your maid, the Levite, the stranger, the orphan and the widow . . ." In the words of Maimonides: "When one eats and drinks, one must also feed the stranger, the orphan, the widow and the other unfortunate paupers. One who locks the doors of his courtyard and feasts and drinks with his children and wife but does not feed the poor and the embittered—this is not the joy of the mitzvah, but the joy of his stomach."

Selfish festivity is divisive, accentuating the differences between the haves and the have-nots, between the full and empty stomachs of society. But the joy of a mitzvah, joy as defined by Torah, unites. Master and servant, family man and loner, wealthy man and pauper, are all united by the giving and compassionate joy of the Jewish festival.

Nevertheless, even the most generous joy cannot be said to achieve a "unity" in the ultimate sense of the word; at most, it introduces a connection between disparate individuals. The pauper remains separated from the rich man by a gulf of status and economic station, as does the servant from the master and the stranger from the homesteader. Joyous hearts and giving hands extend across these gulfs, but the division and distance remain.

So to inspire a deeper and truer unity, the Jew acquires the Four Kinds on Sukkot.

Taste of Knowledge and Scent of Deed

The Midrash explains that the Four Kinds represent four spiritual classes within the community. The *etrog*, which has both a delicious taste and a delightful aroma, represents the perfect individual—one who is both knowledgeable in Torah and replete with good deeds. The *lulav*, whose fruit (dates) have taste but no smell, personifies the learned but deed-deficient individual—the scholar who devotes his life to the pursuit of the divine wisdom, but shuns the active sphere of Jewish life. The *hadass*'s delightful scent and lack of taste describe the active but ignorant individual. Finally, the tasteless, scentless *aravah* represents the Jew who lacks all outward expression of his Jewishness.

On Sukkot, the *lulav*, *hadass*, *aravah* and *etrog* are bound and joined together, reiterating the underlying oneness of a topically diverse people. Whatever may divide the scholarly from the ignorant and the more observant from the less so, Sukkot is a time when all are held together in the single hand of Jewish identity.

So while the joy of Sukkot introduces a unifying give-and-take relationship between various segments of the community of Israel, the Four Kinds take this unity a step further, integrating us into a single entity. By taking the Four Kinds in hand, we reiterate that, despite our disparities, we are all one.

Based on Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

IN JEWISH HISTORY

Sunday, September 20, 2026
9 Tishrei, 5787

Burial of Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai

The great Talmudic sage Rabbi Elazar, son of the famed Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai

Monday, September 21, 2026
10 Tishrei, 5787

Start of Yom Kippur War (1973)

A coalition of Arab forces led by Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel in what became known as the Yom Kippur War. Although Israel suffered tremendous casualties, the war ultimately resulted in a miraculous Israeli victory.

Tuesday, September 22, 2026
11 Tishrei, 5787

Donations Brought for the Mishkan (Tabernacle) (1313 BCE)

The day after Moses' descent from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur, he gathered the nation of Israel and instructed them to construct a mishkan [tabernacle] so that G-d's presence would dwell among them. The Jews eagerly brought all of the necessary materials, exceeding what was needed for the task

Wednesday, September 23, 2026
12 Tishrei, 5787

Passing of R. Abraham "The Angel" (1776)

The 12th of Tishrei is the *yahrzeit* (anniversary of the passing) of Rabbi Abraham (1740-1776) the son of Rabbi DovBer of Mezritch and study partner of Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, known as "Rabbi Abraham the Angel" for his saintliness and ascetism.

Thursday, September 24, 2026
13 Tishrei, 5787

Passing of Rebbe Maharash (1882)

Tishrei 13 is the *yahrzeit* of the fourth Rebbe of Chabad-Lubavitch, Rabbi Shmuel Schneersohn, known as "Maharash" (a Hebrew acronym for "our master Rabbi Shmuel").

Rabbi Shmuel was born in the town of Lubavitch on the 2nd of Iyar of the year 5594 from creation (1834). His father was the third Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch (1789-1866). Though the youngest of Rabbi Menachem Mendel's seven sons, Rabbi Shmuel was chosen to succeed his father as the leader of Chabad Chassidism in the movement's capitol, Lubavitch, at the latter's passing in 1866 (four of his brothers established branches of Chabad in other towns in White Russia and Ukraine).

In addition to authoring and delivering more than 1,000 *maamarim* (discourses) of Chassidic teaching, Rabbi Shmuel was extensively involved in Jewish communal affairs and traveled throughout Europe to generate pressure on the Czarist regime to halt its instigation of pogroms against the Jews of Russia. Rabbi Shmuel passed away at the age of 48 on Tishrei 13, 5643 (1882).

Friday, September 25, 2026
14 Tishrei, 5787

Passing of R. Israel Hopstein, the Maggid of Kosnitz (1814)

R. Israel of Kosnitz was a disciple of a number of great chassidic Rebbes, including R. DovBer of Mezritch. A famed miracle worker, he authored the work *Avodat Yisrael* and was one of the disseminators of Chassidism in Poland.