

## Sukkot (Tishri 15)



The word “Sukkot” means booths, commemorating the forty-year period during which the children of Israel were wandering in the desert, living in temporary shelters. It is also a harvest festival, and is sometimes referred to as the Festival of Ingathering.

In honour of the holiday’s historical significance, we are commanded to dwell in temporary shelters, as our ancestors did in the wilderness. The commandment to “dwell” in a sukkah can be fulfilled by eating meals in the sukkah.

A sukkah must have at least three walls covered with a material that will not blow away in the wind. It can be any size as long as you can live or eat in it. The roof must be made of something that grew from the ground, such as tree branches, corn stalks, or bamboo reeds and should be placed sparsely enough so that the rain can get in and stars can be seen, but not so sparsely that there is more light than shade. It is common practice to decorate the sukkah especially with fruit and vegetables as this holiday commemorates the harvest.

Another custom at Sukkot is to bring together in a small bunch four species of trees and citrus fruits, called the lulav (the unopened branch of a palm tree) and the etrog (a yellow citrus fruit, similar to a lemon). The lulav is surrounded by three small leafy branches of the myrtle tree and two small branches of the willow tree. These four species symbolize different parts of a person (eyes: myrtle, lips: willow, etrog: heart, lulav: spine) and just as these branches and fruit are bound together on Sukkot, so every part of a person should be used to serve G-d.

At Shalom Village, our residents spend time in the sukkah (we have three at Shalom Village) during the day, having snacks and sharing stories, and residents have an opportunity to bless the lulav and etrog. Before dinner our residents light candles and say blessings over the wine and bread.

Sukkot ends with the holidays of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. On Simchat Torah we will sing and dance with our Torahs at Shalom Village.