



CEREMONY & CELEBRATION FAMILY EDITION

Succot

Family Edition

SUCCOT

It is a festival of simple things. It is, Jewishly, the time we come closer to nature than any other, sitting in a hut with only leaves for a roof, and taking in our hands the unprocessed fruits and foliage of the lulav, the etrog, twigs of *hadassim* and *aravim*.

Table of Contents

- Succot In a Nutshell
- Succot for Our Time
- Deep Diving into the Tefillah of the Day: The Hakafot of Succot
- Background to the Tefillah
 - Analysis
- Succot for the Young (and Young at Heart!)
 - Top Ten Succot Facts
 - It Once Happened...
 - Chidon on the Chag (A Quick Quiz)
- Educational Companion
 - Succot In a Nutshell
 - Deep Diving into the Tefillah of the Day
 - It Once Happened...
 - Chidon on the Chag (A Quick Quiz)



Succot in a Nutshell

The Torah tells us to: “Live in succot for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in succot so that your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in succot when I brought them out of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” ([Vayikra 23:42-43](#)).

There are two opinions in the Mishnah. Rabbi Eliezer held that the succah represents the Clouds of Glory that surrounded the Israelites during the wilderness years, protecting them from heat during the day and the cold during the night, and bathing them with the radiance of the Divine Presence. Rabbi Akiva on the other hand said, “*Succot mammash*”, meaning a succah is a succah, no more and no less: it is a hut, a booth, a temporary dwelling. It has no symbolism. It is what it is.

If we follow
Rabbi Eliezer
then it is obvious
why we celebrate
by making a
succah. It is
there to remind
us of a miracle.
All three
pilgrimage
festivals are
about miracles.
Pesach is about



the miracle of the Exodus, Shavuot is about the miracle
of the revelation at Mount Sinai, and Succot is about
God's tender care of His people, during the journey
across the desert. But according to Rabbi Akiva, a
succah is merely a hut, so what was the miracle? There
is nothing unusual about living in a hut if you are living

a nomadic existence in the desert. Why should there be a festival dedicated to something ordinary, commonplace and non-miraculous?

Rashbam (Rashi's grandson) says the succah was there to remind the Israelites of their past so that at the very moment they were feeling the greatest satisfaction at living in Israel – at the time of the ingathering of the produce of the land – they should remember their lowly origins. They were once a group of refugees without a home, never knowing when they would have to move on. The festival of Succot, according to Rashbam, exists to remind us of our humble origins so that we never fall into the complacency of taking freedom, the land of Israel and the blessings it yields, for granted. However, there is another way of understanding Rabbi Akiva. The succah represents the courage the Israelites had to travel, to move, to leave security behind, and follow God's call, as did Avraham and Sarah at the dawn of our history. According to

Rabbi Akiva the succah is the temporary home of a temporarily homeless people. It symbolised the courage of a bride willing to follow her husband on a risk-laden journey to a place she had never seen before – a love that showed itself in the fact that she was willing to live in a hut, trusting her husband's promise that one day they would have a permanent home.

What is truly remarkable is that Succot is called, by tradition, *zeman simchateinu*, “our time of joy.” That, to me, is the wonder at the heart of the Jewish experience: that Jews throughout the ages were able to experience risk and uncertainty at every level of their existence and yet they were still able to rejoice. That is spiritual courage of a high order. Faith is not certainty; faith is the courage to live with uncertainty. Faith is the ability to rejoice in the midst of instability and change, travelling through the wilderness of time toward an unknown destination.



Points to Ponder

1. Which of these three approaches to Succot speaks to you the most?
2. What is the link between the themes of Succot explained here and Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?
3. Can you think of examples from Jewish history when Jews lived through risk and uncertainty yet still managed to find joy in their lives?



Succot for Our Time

Adapted from the introduction to the Koren Succot Machzor with commentary and translation by Rabbi Sacks

Of all the festivals, Succot is surely the one that speaks most powerfully to our time. Kohelet (which we read on Succot) could almost have been written in the twenty-first century. Here is the ultimate success, the man who has it all – the houses, the cars, the clothes, the adoring women, the envy of all men – who has pursued everything this world can offer from pleasure to possessions to power to wisdom, and yet who, surveying the totality of his life, can only say, “Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless.”

Kohelet's failure to find meaning is directly related to his obsession with the "I" and the "Me": "I built for myself. I gathered for myself. I acquired for myself." The more he pursues his desires, the emptier his life becomes. There is no more powerful critique of the consumer society, whose idol is the self, whose icon is the "selfie" and whose moral code is "Whatever works for you." This is reflected in today's society that achieved unprecedented affluence, giving people more choices than they had ever known, and yet at the same time saw an unprecedented rise in alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders, stress-related syndromes, depression, attempted suicide and actual suicide. A society of tourists, not pilgrims, is not one that will yield the sense of a life worth living. Of all things people have chosen to worship, the self is the least fulfilling. A culture of narcissism quickly gives way to loneliness and despair.

By the end of the book, Kohelet finds meaning in simple things. “Sweet is the sleep of a labouring man. Enjoy life with the woman you love. Eat, drink and enjoy the sun.” That, ultimately, is the meaning of Succot as a whole. It is a festival of simple things. It is, Jewishly, the time we come closer to nature than any other, sitting in a hut with only leaves for a roof, and taking in our hands the unprocessed fruits and foliage of the palm branch, the citron, twigs of myrtle and leaves of willow. It is a time when we briefly liberate ourselves from the sophisticated pleasures of the city and the processed artefacts of a technological age, and recapture some of the innocence we had when we were young, when the world still had the radiance of wonder.



Reflect

Where do you find the most meaning in your life?

What makes a hut more beautiful than a home is that when it comes to Succot, there is no difference between the

richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor.

The power of Succot is that it takes us back to the most elemental roots of our being. You don't need to live in a palace to be surrounded by Clouds of Glory. You don't need to be rich to buy yourself the same leaves and fruit that a billionaire uses in worshiping God. Living in the succah and inviting guests to your meal, you discover – such is the premise of Ushpizin, the mystical guests – that the people who have come to visit you are none other than Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaacov and their wives. What makes a hut more beautiful than a home is that when it comes to Succot, there is no difference between the richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor. We are all strangers on earth, temporary

residents in God's almost eternal universe. And whether or not we are capable of pleasure, whether or not we have found happiness, we can all feel joy.



Reflect

Where do you find the most joy in your life? Is your answer to this and the previous question the same?

Succot is the time we ask the most profound question of what makes a life worth living. Having prayed on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to be written in the Book of

Life, Succot and Kohelet force us to remember how brief life actually is, and how vulnerable. “Teach us rightly to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Tehillim 90:12). What matters is not how long we live, but how intensely we feel that life is a gift we repay by giving to others. Joy, the overwhelming theme of the festival, is what we feel when we know that it is a privilege simply to be alive, inhaling the intoxicating beauty of this moment amidst the profusion of nature, the teeming diversity of life and the sense of communion with those many others with whom we share a history and a hope.



Reflect

Take a moment to consider if you agree that it is a privilege to be alive, and how that understanding will impact the way you live your life?

Most



majestically of all, Succot is the festival of insecurity. It

is the candid acknowledgment that there is no life without risk, yet we can face the future without fear when we know we are not alone. God is with us, in the rain that brings blessings to the earth, in the love that brought the universe and us into being, and in the resilience of spirit that allowed a small and vulnerable people to outlive the greatest empires the world has ever known. Succot reminds us that God's glory was present in the small, portable Mishkan that Moshe and the Israelites built in the desert even more emphatically than in Shlomo HaMelech's Temple with all its grandeur. A temple can be destroyed.

But a succah, broken, can be rebuilt tomorrow. Security is not something we can achieve physically but it is something we can acquire mentally, psychologically, spiritually. All it needs is the courage and willingness to sit under the shadow of God's sheltering wings.

The succah became in the course of time a symbol, not only of forty years in the wilderness, but of centuries of exile and dispersion. In the Middle Ages alone, Jews were expelled from England in 1290, from France several times (1182, 1322, 1394), from Vienna in 1421, Cologne in 1424, Bavaria in 1442, Milan in 1489 and most traumatically, from Spain in 1492. In the 1880s a wave of pogroms in Eastern Europe sent millions of Jews into flight to the West, and these migrations continue even today. Jewish history reads like a vast continuation of the stages of the Israelites' journey in the thirty-second chapter of the book of Bamidbar: "They traveled...and they encamped.... They traveled... and they encamped." Too often, home turned out to be no more than a temporary dwelling, a succah. More than most, whether in the land of Israel or elsewhere, Jews have known the full force of insecurity.

Sitting in the succah
under its canopy of
leaves, I often think of
my ancestors and their
wanderings across
Europe in search of
safety, and I begin to
understand how faith
was their only home.

Yet with its genius for the unexpected and its ability to rescue hope from tragedy, Judaism declared this festival of insecurity to be *zeman simchateinu*, the season of our rejoicing. For the succah, that quintessential symbol of vulnerability, turns out to be the embodiment of faith, the faith of a people who forty centuries ago set out on a risk-laden journey across a wilderness of space and time, with no more protection than the sheltering presence of the Shechinah. Sitting in the succah under its canopy of leaves, I often think of my ancestors and their wanderings across Europe in search of safety, and I begin to understand how faith was their only home. It was fragile, chillingly exposed to the storms of prejudice and hate. But it proved stronger than superpowers and outlived them all.

Toward the end of his great book, *A History of the Jews*, Paul Johnson wrote:

The Jews were not just innovators. They were also exemplars and epitomisers of the human condition. They seemed to present all the inescapable dilemmas of man in a heightened and clarified form.... The Jews were the emblem of homeless and vulnerable humanity. But is not the whole earth no more than a temporary transit camp?

Those words go to the heart of Succot. To know that life is full of risk and yet to affirm it, to sense the full insecurity of the human situation and yet to rejoice: this, for me, is the essence of faith. Judaism is no comforting illusion that all is well in this dark world. It

is instead the courage to celebrate in the midst of uncertainty, and to rejoice even in the transitory shelter of the succah, the Jewish symbol of home.



Reflect

How can the message of Succot help us live through difficult times?



Deep Diving into the Tefillah of the Day: Blessing on Taking the Lulav

Tefillah text and commentary by Rabbi Sacks is taken from the [Koren Sacks Succot Machzor](#)

סדר נטילת לולב

Blessing on Taking the Lulav

Some say the following:

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵי וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתַי
שֶׁתְּשַׁרְהַ לְשִׁכְנָתְךָ בֵּינֵינוּ וְתַפְרוֹס עָלֵינוּ סֶכֶת
שְׁלוֹמְךָ בְּזִכּוֹת מִצְוֹת סְכָה שֶׁאֲנִיחֵנוּ מִקִּימִין

לְיַחַדָּא שְׁמָא דְקוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְשְׁכִינְתָּהּ
בְּדַחִילוֹ וְרַחֲמֵימוֹ לְיַחַדָּא שְׁם י"ה בּו"ה בְּיַחַדָּא
שְׁלִים בְּשֵׁם כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְלִהְקִיף אוֹתָם מִזִּיּוֹ
כְּבוֹדָהּ הַקְּדוּשָׁה וְהַטְּהוֹר נְטוּי עַל רְאֲשֵׁיהֶם
מִלְמַעְלָה כְּנֶשֶׁר יַעִיר קִנּוּ, וּמִשָּׁם יוֹשִׁפֵּעַ שְׁפֵעַ
הַחַיִּים לְעַבְדֶּיהָ פִּב"פ אֲמַתְהָ. וּבְזָכוֹת צִאתִי
מִבֵּיתִי הַחוּצָה וְדַרְךְ מִצּוֹתֶיהָ אָרוּצָה יִחַשְׁבֵּ לִי
זֹאת כְּאֵלוֹ הַרְחַקְתִּי נְדוּד, וְהָרַב כְּבִסְנֵי מַעֲוֹנֵי
וּמַחֲטָאֵתִי טַהֲרֵנִי, וּמֵאוֹשְׁפִיזִין עֲלָאִין אוֹשְׁפִיזִין
דְּמִהֵימְנוּתָא תְּהַיִּינָה אֲזִנֵּיהָ קְשׁוּבוֹת רַב בְּרָכוֹת,
וְלָרַעְבִים גַּם צָמְאִים תֵּן לַחֲמָם וּמִיָּמָם הַנְּאֻמָּנִים,
וְתִתֵּן לִי זְכוֹת לְשֹׁבֵת וְלַחֲסוֹת בְּסִתְרֵי צֵל כְּנֹפֶה
בְּעֵת פְּטִירְתִּי מִן הָעוֹלָם, וְלַחֲסוֹת מִזֶּרֶם וּמִמָּטָר,
כִּי תִמְטִיר עַל רְשָׁעִים פִּחִים, וְתִהְיֶה חֲשׁוּבָה
מִצּוֹת סֶכֶה זֹו שְׁאַנִּי מְקַיִם כְּאֵלוֹ קִיַּמְתִּיהָ בְּכָל
פְּרִטְיָהּ וְדִקְדוּקִיהָ וְתִנְאַיָּהּ וְכָל מִצְוֹת הַתְּלוּיִם
בָּהּ. וְתִיטִיב לָנוּ הַחֲתִימָה, וְתִזְכְּנוּ לִישֵׁב יָמִים

רַבִּים עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲדַמַּת קֹדֶשׁ בְּעֵבֹדְתֶךָ
וּבִירְאָתֶךָ. בָּרוּךְ ה' לְעוֹלָם אָמֵן וְאָמֵן

May it be Your will, Lord my God and God of my fathers, that through the fruit of the citron tree, the palm frond, the myrtle branches and willows of the brook, the letters of Your unique name draw close to one another and become united in my hand. Make it known I am called by Your name, so that [evil] will fear to come close to me. When I wave them, may a rich flow of blessings flow from the supreme Source of wisdom to the place of the Tabernacle and the site of the House of our God. May the command of these four species be considered by You as if I had fulfilled it in all its details and roots,

as well as the 613 commandments dependent on it, for it is my intention to unify the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His Divine Presence, in reverence and love, to unify the name Yod-Heh with Vav-Heh, in perfect unity in the name of all Israel, Amen. Blessed is the Lord forever, Amen and Amen.

Then the לולב is taken in the right hand, with the הדסים on the right, ערבות on the left. The אתרוג is taken in the left hand, with its pointed end toward the floor. Then say the following blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת לֻלָב

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has made us holy through

His commandments, and has commanded us about taking the lulav.

On the first day the לולב is taken, add:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ
וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has given us life, sustained us and brought us to this time.

Invert the etrog, so that its pointed end is facing up, and wave the lulav and etrog in the following sequence, three times in each direction: ahead, right, back, left, up, down.



Background to the Tefillah

The *Arba Minim*, the “Four Species”, is one of the central commands of the festival. The Torah specifies:

“On the first day, you shall take for yourselves a fruit of the citron tree, palm fronds, myrtle branches and willows of the brook, and be joyous in the presence of the Lord your God for seven days.”

Vayikra 23:40

What the Four Species have in common is that wherever you find them, there is water. They are the visible blessings of the rain that fell in the previous year. We bring them together now in thanks to God for the blessing of rain in the past year, and to pray for rain in the year to come.

The blessing we recite refers only to the lulav, since it is the tallest and most conspicuous of the four species. The lulav is waved in six directions: east, south, west and north, (i.e., straight ahead, right, rear, left) corresponding to the directions of the wind, then up and down. In each case it should be waved three times.

The Four Species represent four parts of the body. The lulav represents the spine, the myrtle the eyes, the willow the mouth, and the etrog the heart. As the etrog has both aroma and fruit, so there are those in the Jewish people who have knowledge of Torah and good deeds. As the palm tree has fruit but no aroma, so there

are those in the Jewish people who have knowledge of the Torah but not good deeds. As the myrtle has aroma but no fruit, so there are those in the Jewish people who have good deeds but not knowledge of the Torah. And as the willow has neither aroma nor fruit, so there are those in the Jewish people who have neither Torah nor good deeds. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: “To make it impossible for Israel to be destroyed, let all of them be bound together, and let each atone for the others” (Pesikta deRav Kahana 27:9).



Analysis

The Four Species are a symbolic expression of our rejoicing that the Israelites left the wilderness, “A place with no grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; there was not even water to drink” ([Bamidbar 20:25](#)), and

came to a country full of fruit trees and rivers. In order to remember this, we take the fruit which is the most pleasant of the land, branches that smell the best, the most beautiful leaves, and also the best of herbs, i.e., the willows of the brook. These four kinds have also these three purposes: First, they were plentiful in those days in the Land of Israel so that everyone could easily get them. Secondly, they have a good appearance, they are green; some of them, namely the citron and the myrtle, are also excellent as regards their smell, the branches of the palm tree and the willow having neither good nor bad smell. Thirdly, they keep fresh and green for seven days, which is not the case with peaches, pomegranates, asparagus, nuts and the like.

But is Israel really a land with plentiful water? Moshe described it to the people in a way that suggested it was not:

The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.

Devarim 11:10–12

Israel would not have a regular, predictable water supply like the Tigris–Euphrates valley or the Nile



Delta. It depends on rain, and in Israel rain is not something that can be taken for granted. Drought and

famine led Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov into exile at some time in their lives.

The uncertainty of rain is another dimension of insecurity that frames Succot as a festival. The natural focus of attention for those who live in the land is to look up to the heaven, rather than down to the naturally fertile earth. It meant the strongest possible connection between faith itself and the rainfall needed for the land to yield its produce, and for the nation to be able to celebrate a harvest of plenty. Israel is a land where the climate itself becomes a commentary on the faithfulness of the nation to God. Israel is the land of promise, but it will always depend on God's willingness to fulfil His promises.

The topography and climate of a country affects the culture and ethos of those who live there. In Mesopotamia and Egypt, the most powerful reality was the regularity of nature, the succession of the seasons

which seemed to mirror the slow revolution of the stars. The cultures to which these cradles of civilisation gave rise were cosmological and their sense of time cyclical. The universe seemed to be ruled by the heavenly bodies whose hierarchy and order was replicated in the hierarchy and order of life on earth.

Israel, by contrast, was a land without regularities. There was no guarantee that next year the rain would fall, the earth would yield its crops, and the trees their fruit. So, in Israel a new sense of time was born – the time we call historical. Those who lived, or live, in Israel exist in a state of radical contingency. They can never take the future for granted. They depend on something other than nature. In Egypt, where the source of life was the Nile, you looked down. In Israel, where the source of life is rain, you had no choice but to look up.

When Moshe told the Israelites the full story about the land, he was telling them that it was a place where not just wheat and barley, but the human spirit also, grew. It was the land where people are lifted beyond themselves because, time and again, they have to believe a Being beyond themselves. Not accidentally but essentially, by its climate, topography and location, Israel is the land where, merely to survive, the human eye must turn to heaven and the human ear to heaven's call.



Points to Ponder

1. How do the Four Species connect us to the land of Israel, and how is this connected to the themes of Succot?
2. How does the Land of Israel encourage the human spirit to grow?
3. Do you think that is still the case today?



For the Young (and the Young at Heart!)

Top Ten Succot Facts

1. Succot has three other names:
 - *Chag Ha'asif*, “The Festival of Gathering”
 - *Chag*, “Festival”
 - *Zeman Simchateinu*, “The Time of Our Rejoicing”
2. Succot is a seven-day festival – the eighth day that follows it, Shemini Atzeret, is a separate festival.
3. Succot is one of the three annual *shalosh regalim* (the three pilgrimage festivals) where there was a special *mitzvah* to travel to Jerusalem and participate in the Temple service (the other two pilgrimage festivals are Pesach and Shavuot).
4. The main *mitzvah* of Succot is to “live” in a succah all eight days.

5. The *schach* that forms the roof of the succah must be made of organic material that has not been processed or made into something for another purpose.
6. The other unique mitzvah of the festival of Succot is to take the *Arba Minim* – the Four Species. The *mitzvah* is fulfilled by waving them in six directions. The Four Species are:
 - Lulav (palm frond)
 - Etrog (citron)
 - Hadassim (myrtles)
 - Aravot (willows)
7. Each day of Succot (apart from Shabbat), we walk around the bimah in shul while holding the Four Species saying special prayers called *Hoshanot*.
8. The last day of the festival of Succot is called Hoshana Raba (The Great Hoshana), when we circle the *bimah*

seven times with our lulav and etrog, saying *Hoshanot*.

9. During Temple times there were special joyous water drawing celebrations called *Simchat Beit Hasho'eva*, where water was poured over the altar.
10. Many people have the mystical custom to say *Ushpizin* in their succah every day, where seven biblical characters are welcomed to the succah, a different one each night.



In Once Happened on Succot...

Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz was famous for his wisdom, and his house was always full of people seeking his advice. He found that this gave him no time to study or write the books he wished to write.



“Succah” by Rochelle Blumenfeld

One year, he finally decided to refuse to see any more people, so that he could concentrate on

study and prayer. As Succot approached, he invited a number of people to be his guests during the festival, but they were upset by his decision to shut himself away from the community, and refused his invitation.

On the first night of Succot, as he sat alone in his succah, he recited the *Ushpizin*, inviting Avraham to be his guest.

In a vision he saw Avraham standing outside his succah, refusing to enter. “Why will you not enter?” asked the Rabbi. Avraham replied, “I will not enter a place where there are no other guests.”

Rabbi Pinchas, realising his mistake, once again opened his home to the whole community.



Points to Ponder

1. What lesson did Rabbi Pinchas learn in this story?
2. Why do you think it is Avraham who appears to Rabbi Pinchas in the vision?
3. What is the connection between the mitzvah of hospitality and the themes of Succot?



Chidon on the Chag (A Quick Quiz)

1. What are the other three names for the festival of Succot?
2. According to the Torah, why do we sit in the succah on Succot?
3. How many walls must a succah have?
4. What must the *schach* for the succah be made from?
5. What are the *Arba Minim*?
6. When do we have a mitzvah to take the Arba Minim? When do we not?
7. What is *Ushpizin*?
8. Which *megillah* is read on Succot?
9. What is the Simchat Beit Hasho'eva?
10. How many times do we walk around the bimah on Hoshana Raba?



Educational Companion to the Questions

Succot in a Nutshell

1. The three approaches are:
 - The succah represents the Clouds of Glory that surrounded the Israelites

during the wilderness years (Rabbi Eliezer).

- Succot exists to remind us of our humble origins so that we never fall into the complacency of taking freedom, the land of Israel and the blessings it yields, for granted (Rabbi Akiva according to Rashbam).
- The succah represents the courage the Israelites had to travel, to move, to leave security behind, and follow God's call (Rabbi Akiva according to Rabbi Sacks).

2. The underlying theme of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is the fragility of life and how dependent we are on God for our wellbeing. We acknowledge this on these days and put our faith in God that He will do what is best for us. These themes are

also found in the festival of Succot, as seen in the three approaches outlined in answer 1.

3. Examples can be found in every age of exile, when Jews often lived through persecution and uncertainty, yet kept their faith always and managed to hand on their love of Judaism to their children. Examples of these periods in Jewish history include the Crusades in the 12th and 13th centuries, the expulsion from Spain in the 15th century, and the Holocaust in the 20th century.

Deep Diving into the Tefillah of the Day

1. The Four Species are all native to the land of Israel and can be found there in plentiful numbers. They represent the

beauty and fertility of the land. But they are all species that require much water to grow. This connects us to Succot's themes of water and our dependence on God for water and all sustenance.

2. While other nations which have a more reliable water source and therefore a more stable material life may live with an innate sense of security, the land of Israel's climate causes its inhabitants to continuously look to God for rain and sustenance, thereby always encouraging spiritual growth as we examine our deeds and constantly strive to improve ourselves so that we are deserving of God's help.

3. While today we have technology that can help us live in an arid climate that has no reliable water source (such as the Middle East), we are still dependent on rain, and

are not completely independent of the need for natural water sources. However, modern Jewish history has shown us that there are many other threats to existence for the Jewish people who live in the land of Israel. Perhaps we can see these as a modern-day version of needing to continuously connect to God for protection and pray for our very survival.

It Once Happened on Succot...

1. There are various Jewish values that sometimes compete with each other. In this case, the conflicting values were the study of Torah and the mitzvah of hospitality and chessed (lovingkindness). The lesson he learned was that mitzvot concerning other people take priority to

mitzvot that are more concerned with our own spiritual wellbeing and our personal connection with God.

2. Avraham is the first of the biblical guests we invite into our succah during the custom of reciting *ushpizin* (a different personality is invited in on each night of Succot). Avraham is also the most appropriate person from Jewish history to teach Rabbi Pinchas this message because he represented the core values of *chessed* and *hachnasat orchim* (hospitality), as shown in the story of the angels who came to visit him ([Bereishit chapter 18](#)).

3. One of the themes of Succot is God's protection and love for us in the desert as we travelled between Egypt and the land of Israel. The mitzvot of hospitality and *chessed* in general are a way for us to be

like God and behave in the same way towards our neighbours and friends.

Chidon on the Chag (A Quick Quiz)

1. *Chag Ha'asif*, “The Festival of Gathering.”; *Chag*, “Festival”; *Zeman Simchateinu*, “The Time of Our Rejoicing.”
2. To remember the way the Israelites lived in the wilderness after they left Egypt and journeyed to the land of Israel.
3. Two and a half (minimum).
4. Something natural that once grew, but is no longer growing, and that has not been manufactured into a utensil of some sort.
5. Lulav (palm frond), Etrog (citron), Hadassim (myrtles), Aravot (willows).

6. On each of the seven days of Succot (except when it is also Shabbat). We do not have a mitzvah to take the *Arba Minim* on Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah.
7. *Ushpizin* is a mystical custom of inviting a different biblical character into the succah each night of Succot.
8. Kohelet (Ecclesiastes).
9. Special joyous water drawing celebrations where water was poured over the altar.
10. Seven times.

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