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SUKKOT

Sukkot ([Hebrew](#): סוכות or סוכות [su'kot], *sukkōt*; traditional [Ashkenazi](#) spelling: *Sukkos/Succos*), commonly called by Christians the **Feast of Tabernacles** or in some translations the **Festival of Shelters**,^[1] and known also as the **Feast of Ingathering** (חג האסיף, *Chag HaAsif*), is a [biblical Jewish holiday](#) celebrated on the 15th day of the seventh month, [Tishrei](#) (varies from late September to late October). During the existence of the [Jerusalem Temple](#), it was one of the [Three Pilgrimage Festivals](#) ([Hebrew](#): שלוש רגלים, *shalosh regalim*) on which the [Israelites](#) were commanded to perform a pilgrimage to the Temple.

The names used in the [Torah](#) are *Chag HaAsif*, translated to "Festival of Ingathering" or "Harvest Festival", and *Chag HaSukkot*, translated to "Festival of Booths".^[2] This corresponds to

the double significance of Sukkot. The one mentioned in the [Book of Exodus](#) is agricultural in nature—"Festival of Ingathering at the year's end" ([Exodus 34:22](#))—and marks the end of the harvest time and thus of the agricultural year in the [Land of Israel](#). The more elaborate religious significance from the [Book of Leviticus](#) is that of commemorating the [Exodus](#) and the dependence of the [People of Israel](#) on the will of God ([Leviticus 23:42–43](#)).

The holiday lasts seven days in the Land of Israel and eight in the [diaspora](#). The first day (and second day in the diaspora) is a [Shabbat-like holiday](#) when [work](#) is forbidden. This is followed by intermediate days called [Chol Hamoed](#), when certain work is permitted. The festival is closed with another Shabbat-like holiday called [Shemini Atzeret](#) (one day in the Land of Israel, two days in the diaspora, where the second day is called [Simchat Torah](#)). Shemini Atzeret coincides with the eighth day of Sukkot outside the Land of Israel.

The [Hebrew](#) word *sukkōt* is the plural of *sukkah*, "[booth](#)" or "[tabernacle](#)", which is a walled structure covered with *s'chach* (plant material, such as overgrowth or palm

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leaves). A sukkah is the name of the temporary dwelling in which farmers would live during harvesting, a fact connecting to the agricultural significance of the holiday stressed by the Book of Exodus. As stated in Leviticus, it is also intended as a reminiscence of the type of fragile dwellings in which the Israelites dwelt during their 40 years of travel in the desert after the Exodus from slavery in [Egypt](#). Throughout the holiday, meals are eaten inside the sukkah and many people sleep there as well.

On each day of the holiday it is mandatory to perform a waving ceremony with the [Four Species](#).

LAWS AND CUSTOMS

Sukkot is a seven-day festival. Inside the [Land of Israel](#), the first day is celebrated as a full festival with special prayer services and holiday meals. Outside the Land of Israel, the first two days are celebrated as full festivals. The seventh day of Sukkot is called [Hoshana Rabbah](#) ("Great Hoshana", referring to the tradition that worshippers in the [synagogue](#) walk around the perimeter of the sanctuary during morning services) and has a special observance of its own.

The intermediate days are known as *Chol HaMoed* ("festival weekdays"). According to [Halakha](#), some types of work are forbidden during *Chol HaMoed*.^[9] In Israel many businesses are closed during this time.^[10]

Throughout the week of Sukkot, meals are eaten in the sukkah. If a [brit milah](#) (circumcision ceremony) or [Bar Mitzvah](#) rises during Sukkot, the [seudat mitzvah](#) (obligatory festive meal) is served in the sukkah. Similarly, the father of a newborn boy greets guests to his Friday-night [Shalom Zachar](#) in the sukkah. Males awaken there,

although the requirement is waived in case of [drought](#). Every day, a blessing is recited over the [Lulav](#) and the [Etrog](#).^[11]

Keeping of Sukkot is detailed in the [Hebrew Bible](#) ([Nehemiah 8:13–18](#), [Zechariah 14:16–19](#) and [Leviticus 23:34–44](#)); the [Mishnah](#) ([Sukkah 1:1–5:8](#)); the [Tosefta](#) ([Sukkah 1:1–4:28](#)); and the [Jerusalem Talmud](#) ([Sukkah 1a–](#)) and [Babylonian Talmud](#) ([Sukkah 2a–56b](#)).