**SUKKOT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Laws and customs**

Sukkot is a seven day holiday, with the first day celebrated as a full festival with special prayer services and holiday meals. The remaining days are known as [Chol HaMoed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chol_HaMoed) ("festival weekdays"). The seventh day of Sukkot is called [Hoshana Rabbah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hoshana_Rabbah) ("Great Hoshana", referring to the tradition that worshippers in the [synagogue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synagogue) walk around the perimeter of the sanctuary during morning services) and has a special observance of its own. Outside Israel, the first two days are celebrated as full festivals. Throughout the week of Sukkot, meals are eaten in the sukkah and Orthodox Jewish families sleep there, although the requirement is waived in case of rain. Every day, a blessing is recited over the [Lulav](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lulav) and the [Etrog](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etrog). Observance of Sukkot is detailed in the Book of [Nehemiah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nehemiah) and [Leviticus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leviticus) 23:34-44 in the [Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible), the [Mishnah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnah) (Sukkah 1:1–5:8); the [Tosefta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tosefta) (Sukkah 1:1–4:28); and the [Jerusalem Talmud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem_Talmud) (Sukkah 1a–) and Babylonian [Talmud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud) ([Sukkah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukkah_(Talmud)" \o "Sukkah (Talmud)) 2a–56b).

**Building a sukkah**

The sukkah walls can be constructed of any material (wood, canvas, aluminum siding, sheets). The walls can be free-standing or include the sides of a building or porch. The roof must be of organic material, known as [S'chach](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%27chach), such as leafy tree overgrowth or palm fronds. It is customary to decorate the interior of the sukkah with hanging decorations, the [Seven Species](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Species).[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukkot#cite_note-8)

**Special prayers**

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:PikiWiki_Israel_14882_Western_Wall_in_Jerusalem.jpg)

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/static-1.21wmf3/skins/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:PikiWiki_Israel_14882_Western_Wall_in_Jerusalem.jpg)

Sukkot prayers at the [Kotel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Wall)

Prayers during Sukkot include the reading of the Torah every day, reciting the [Mussaf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_services) (additional) service after morning prayers, reciting [Hallel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallel), and adding special additions to the [Amidah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amidah) and [Grace after Meals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birkat_HaMazon). In addition, the service includes rituals involving the Four Species. The lulav and etrog are not brought to the synagogue on Shabbat.

*Hoshanot*

On each day of the festival, worshippers walk around the synagogue carrying their Four species while reciting Psalm 118:25 and special prayers known as *Hoshanot*. This takes place either after the morning's Torah reading or at the end of Mussaf. This ceremony commemorates the [willow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aravah_(Sukkot)) ceremony at the [Temple in Jerusalem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem), in which willow branches were piled beside the altar with worshipers parading around the altar reciting prayers.