

How to Celebrate Sukkos – Part 1:

The Mitzvah of Living in a Sukkah:

1. For the entire seven days, a person should consider the Sukkah to be his permanent home and his house a temporary place. Therefore, a person should eat, sleep, and spend his time in the Sukkah in the same way that he does in the house during the year. He fulfills a Torah commandment every single moment that he spends in the Sukkah, both day and night.
2. A person should live in the Sukkah in the same manner that he lives at home during the year. Just as he naturally leaves his home to do certain activities and attend to various needs, so too may he leave the Sukkah when the occasion demands it. Nevertheless, it is praiseworthy to maximize the amount of time spent in the Sukkah since every moment brings eternal reward.
3. There are three occasions when one is obliged to be in the Sukkah:
 - On the first night of Sukkos
 - When eating a meal
 - When sleeping
4. Women are not obligated to live or sit in the Sukkah. However, a woman who sits in the Sukkah fulfills a Torah Mitzvah.
5. Women should preferably light the Shabbos and Yom Tov candles in the Sukkah, since the main Mitzvah is to enjoy the lights during the meal. However, if there is a concern that they may be extinguished by the wind, or they may be a fire risk [especially when there are little children in the Sukkah], she should light them in the house. When lighting in the house, they should, if possible, be placed near a window or glass door that faces the Sukkah.
6. Boys from the age of five or six should be trained to fulfill the Mitzvah of living in the Sukkah. In addition, it is certainly beneficial to have children of all ages be in the Sukkah.
7. A man is obligated to daven with a Minyan in Shul. Just as he leaves his house to go to Shul, he should also leave the Sukkah to go to Shul.
8. Ideally, one should minimize mundane talk while in the Sukkah. Nevertheless, if a person needs to discuss business matters [only on Chol Hamoed] with a friend, he may do so and should not leave the Sukkah.

Eating in the Sukkah:

1. Strictly speaking, only meals must be eaten in the Sukkah, but not snacks or drinks. However, it is praiseworthy to eat and drink everything inside the Sukkah.
2. A meal consists of eating bread that is larger than the volume of a Halachik egg, which is: between 2 – 3 ½ ounces [or 58-100 cc]. A meal could also consist of 1-1 ¾ ounces [or 29-50 cc.] of bread accompanied with other food.
3. Strictly speaking, one who is eating an entire meal without bread, is not required to eat it in the Sukkah; but it is strongly recommended to do so.
4. Regarding Mezonos foods such as cake and the like, they are equated with bread. Therefore, one should not eat outside of the Sukkah a piece of Mezonos larger than the volume on a Halachik egg. [rice is excluded from this Mezonos rule.]
5. If a person who is eating a meal in the Sukkah, everything he eats is considered to be part of the meal. Therefore, he is forbidden to have any food or drink outside of the Sukkah during that meal.

Sleeping in the Sukkah:

1. During the week of Sukkos, the Sukkah is to be considered as a person's home. Since the primary activities of the home are eating and sleeping, a man is obligated to sleep in the Sukkah. According to some opinions, sleeping in the Sukkah is even more important than eating there.
2. There are two reasons why people may be lenient and sleep in the house:
 - In many countries, the weather is cold at this time of year, and sleeping in the Sukkah would cause much discomfort.
 - Women do not usually sleep in the Sukkah, and if a married man would sleep in the Sukkah leaving his wife alone in the house, this may cause him and her distress.

3. If the temperature is so cold in the Sukkah, to the degree that he would not sleep in his house as well, one should not sleep in the Sukkah. However, it is praiseworthy to organize a way to heat the Sukkah at night in order to be able to perform this important Mitzvah.
4. It is certain that a healthy single or married man during the day, or if a wife does not mind her husband sleeping in the Sukkah at night, AND the weather is favorable – should sleep in the Sukkah.
5. Ideally, one should eat and sleep in the Sukkah with nothing intervening between him and the S'chach. However, if necessary, it is permitted to sleep under a standard table.

The First Night of Sukkos:

1. The first night of Sukkos is different from the rest of Sukkos in the following way: On the first night of Sukkos, men are obligated to eat in the Sukkah. During the rest of Sukkos, they are obligated to eat in the Sukkah only if they want to eat a meal.
2. One should preferably eat a piece of bread the size of a Halachik egg. If this is difficult, one can eat ½ of that amount.
3. There is a similar obligation on the second night for Jews living outside of Eretz Yisroel.
4. One may not eat this bread before nightfall.
5. Therefore, this year of 5778, ***Kiddush is said no earlier than 7:34 PM, and preferably after 7:42 PM.***
6. The bread should be eaten within a span of between 2-4 minutes.
7. When eating this first piece of bread, you should think of the following:
 - He is fulfilling the Mitzvah to sit in the Sukkah
 - The Sukkah is a reminder of the exodus from Egypt, and the clouds of glory that surrounded the Jewish people in the wilderness protecting them from harm.
8. If one was not thinking of the above and was not even thinking about fulfilling the Mitzvah of Sukkah, he is required to eat more bread with the above thoughts in mind.

The Blessing for the Sukkah:

1. The blessing for the Sukkah ends with the words: “Asher Kidishanu Bemitzsvosav Ve'Tzivanu Leishev BaSukkah.”
2. The blessing is recited under the following conditions:
 - When eating bread that is the amount of larger than a Halachik egg.
 - When eating Mezonos that is the amount of larger than a Halachik egg.
 - When eating Mezonos that is ½ the amount of a Halachik egg at Kiddush on Shabbos or Yom Tov.
3. When eating bread or Mezonos, the blessing of Hamotzi or Mezonos is recited ***before*** the blessing for the Sukkah – followed by the eating of the bread or Mezonos.
4. When Kiddush is said in the evening of Shabbos or Yom Tov, the blessing is included in the Kiddush.
5. When Kiddush is recited in the morning and is followed by Mezonos, the blessing is included in the Kiddush.
6. When the Kiddush is recited in the morning and is followed by bread, there are two customs. Some include the blessing for the Sukkah in the Kiddush, and some recite the blessing together with the blessing of Hamotzi. Both customs are equally acceptable.
7. Although Havdalah is made in the Sukkah, we do not make a blessing for the Sukkah during Havdalah. It would be ideal to eat bread or Mezonos after Havdalah and Make the blessing for the Sukkah with the blessing for the food.
8. If a person forgot to say the blessing and began the meal, he should still say the blessing as soon as he remembers and eat some more.
9. If the person did not remember until after saying the after-blessing, he may still say the blessing if he intends to remain a while in the Sukkah.

10. If a person remains in the Sukkah all day or leaves for a short break, he does not repeat the blessing even at his next meal. If he leaves for a significant break, he should repeat the blessing the next time he eats bread or Mezonos.
11. A significant break would be going out to: pray Shacharis, pray Shacharis and Mincha, leave for two hours, leave due to heavy rain.
12. According to Ashkenazic tradition, women say the blessing in the same situations that men do.
13. The blessing is said while sitting. If Kiddush is recited standing, some have the custom to remain standing until after the blessing for the Sukkah, and some sit down before the blessing for the Sukkah.
14. One says the Shehechyanu blessing the first time one eats in the Sukkah. This is usually on the first night of Sukkos, in which case the blessing is included in Kiddush.

Rain:

1. It is a good idea to have a removable cover or roof for the Sukkah that can be used when it rains. One can not make a blessing for the Sukkah when the cover is on. However, the Sukkah will remain dry, and can be used immediately after the cover is removed once the rain has stopped. One is permitted to eat in a covered Sukkah while it is raining – but does not make a blessing.
2. One is not obligated to eat in the Sukkah if it is raining heavily [except for the first night].
3. One is obligated to eat in the Sukkah if it is raining lightly.
4. Raining heavily is defined by rain coming through the S'chach into the Sukkah to the extent that if this would be happening in the house, he would leave the room.
5. A sensitive person who is disturbed even by light rain [even though most people would not be disturbed], is permitted to leave the Sukkah.
6. If a person is sleeping in the Sukkah, he is permitted to leave even if it is raining lightly, as this disturbs his sleep.
7. If the sky is overcast and it is certain to rain soon, one is obligated to eat and sleep in the Sukkah until it actually rains. Alternatively, one can wait to eat and sleep until it rains, and then begin eating and sleeping in the house.
8. If it is raining to the degree that one is exempt from the Mitzvah, then he should leave. One who remains in the Sukkah at this point is acting foolishly and receives no reward. It is certainly forbidden to make a blessing for the Sukkah at that time.
9. If the rain stops, and you have not yet sat down to eat in the house, you must go back and eat in the Sukkah, even if you originally left the Sukkah in the middle of the meal. If you are in the middle of eating in the house, you may remain there until the end of the meal. [It is praiseworthy to return to the Sukkah immediately, although you are not obligated to do so.]
10. When a person returns to the Sukkah after the rain stops, the previous blessing is no longer valid. Therefore one should repeat the blessing when you eat bread or Mezonos again.
11. If it has stopped raining, but it is still dripping in the Sukkah, you may remain in the house.

Rain on the First Two Nights of Sukkos:

1. If it is raining on the first night of Sukkos, one should preferably wait an hour or two in hope that the rain will stop in order to eat in the Sukkah and fulfill the Mitzvah properly.
2. If the family can not wait so long or has invited guests who are hungry and wish to eat immediately, he should do the following as it is raining:
 - Make Kiddush in the Sukkah omitting the blessing for Sukkah.
 - Wash one's hands.
 - Say Hamotzi and eat ½ the size of a Halachik egg of bread in the Sukkah.
 - Eat the remainder of the meal in the house.
 - Say the after blessing in the house.
3. Under these conditions, women are not required to be in the Sukkah at all. However, they must fulfill the Mitzvah of Kiddush in the house and not in the Sukkah. Therefore, if the Sukkah is adjacent to the house, the women should listen to Kiddush from the house. [They should

remember to say the Shehechyanu blessing for the Sukkah when they eat the first meal there, unless they recited it when lighting candles there.]

4. If the rain stops during the meal, the men should return to the Sukkah, say the blessing for the Sukkah and eat another piece of bread larger than a Halachik egg. They should say the after blessing in the Sukkah. The women may do as they wish.
5. If the rain only stops after one has finished his entire meal and said the after blessing in the house, the men are still required to fulfill the Mitzvah of Sukkah. They should wash again, say the Hamotzi and the blessing on the Sukkah and eat a piece of bread larger than a Halachik egg.
6. If the rain continues, a person should wait as long as he is able to. But if he feels very tired, he may go to sleep for the night.
7. If it rains on the second night of Sukkos, a person should wait a little while in the house in the hope that the rain will stop. If the rain continues, he should make Kiddush and begin the meal in the house. At the end of the meal, he should go to the Sukkah, eat a piece of bread that is ½ the size of a Halachik egg and say the after blessing there. The blessing for the Sukkah should not be recited. If the rain stops during or after the meal, see points 4 and 5.

Special Exemptions:

1. A person is exempt from the Mitzvah of Sukkah in the following situations:
 - Discomfort.
 - Sickness.
 - Preoccupation with other Mitzvos.
 - Travel.
2. Discomfort means that the conditions in the Sukkah are causing him discomfort and he will gain relief by leaving the Sukkah. In the same circumstances he would leave the house, he is then permitted to leave the Sukkah. Common examples of discomfort are:
 - The Sukkah is too hot or too cold. {If one can easily dress warmly or heat the Sukkah, he should do so.}
 - There is an unpleasant smell.
 - There are many insects in the Sukkah.
 - There is noise that is causing much disturbance.
 - Leaves or twigs are falling into the food and he is very disturbed by this.
3. If the lights accidentally go out in the Sukkah on Friday night, you are permitted to go into the house where there is light.
4. You are permitted to actively trap an insect in ajar or cup on Shabbos or Yom Tov, but you may not kill it.
5. There is no Mitzvah to remain in the Sukkah if you are exempt due to discomfort. It is praiseworthy to try to make the Sukkah comfortable in order to be able to remain there.
6. Discomfort does not exempt a person on the first night of Sukkos. He must make Kiddush and eat at least ½ the size of a Halachik egg of bread in the Sukkah before moving into the house, but he does not make the blessing for the Sukkah.
7. The exemption of sickness is defined as either a person who needs to be in bed, or a person who has a pain and will feel more comfortable in the house than in the Sukkah [e.g. headache, pain in the eyes, etc.]
8. A person, who has a tendency to catch a cold due to sleeping in the Sukkah, is permitted to sleep in the house. This is particularly important for children, who are more prone to catch a cold.
9. If a person needs to travel [e.g. for business, to perform a Mitzvah] during Sukkos, he may do so, even though he will not be able to find a Sukkah on the way. Therefore, he may eat freely while traveling, unless he can easily find a Sukkah along the way. However, it is highly recommended to arrange one's schedule in a way so that one not is traveling on Sukkos.
10. It is forbidden to eat or sleep outside of a Sukkah if one is traveling only for pleasure.