

What is Sukkot?

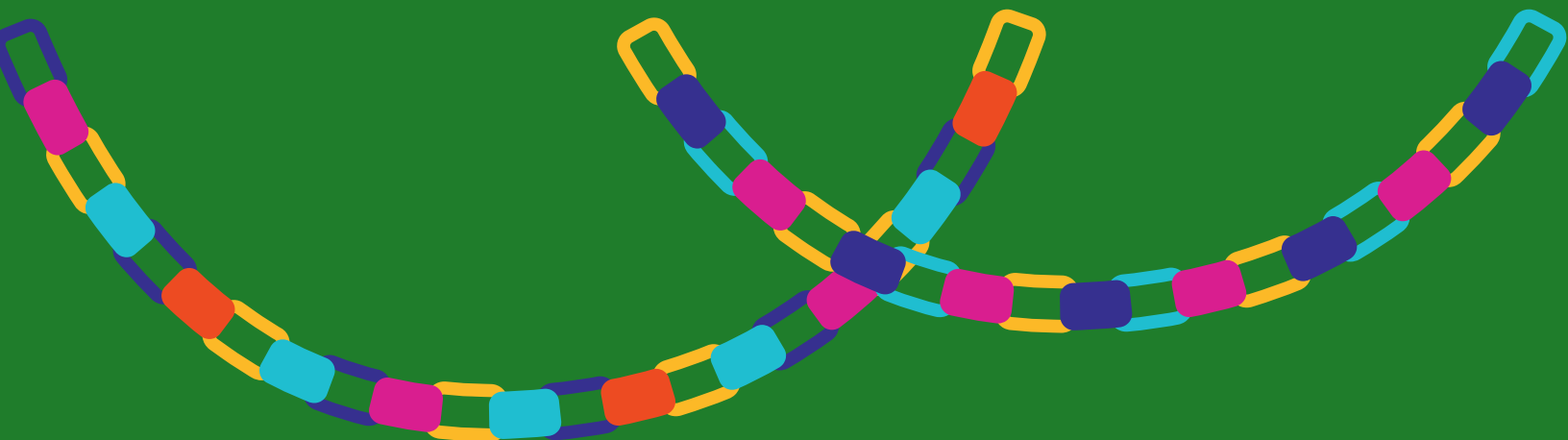
Sukkot is the fall harvest festival, a time to give thanks, as well as to commemorate the 40 years the children of Israel wandered in the desert after the Exodus from Egypt. In Hebrew, sukkot means “booths” or “huts,” and a replica of the shelters Jews lived in while harvesting and during their exile in the desert is at the heart of this joyous celebration.

The sukkah is a temporary shelter built for the holiday. Building and decorating the sukkah can be a fun family project. The commandment to “live in” the sukkah during the holiday can be satisfied by eating meals in it though, if weather and circumstances allow, families can sleep in it as well. Though the sukkah can be framed with modern materials, such as PVC pipe, the roof must be covered in natural materials, such as cornstalks, bamboo or branches. The sukkah is a place of celebration and can be decorated using paper chains, gourds, strings of uncooked pasta and colored pictures. And the crafts can be reused every year.

There are many online options to purchase prefabricated sukkahs or instructions on how to build your own.

When is it?

Sukkot begins five days after Yom Kippur, on the eve of the 15th day of Tishrei, the seventh month in the Jewish calendar, and lasts for seven days. It falls in September-October. It is customary to begin building the sukkah on the day after Yom Kippur.



What Do I Need to Celebrate Sukkot?

Sukkot typically is celebrated with several rituals:

Lulav:

is a bundle of branches made from three species of tree (myrtle, palm and willow).

Etrog:

is a citrus fruit, similar to a lemon. Together, the lulav and etrog are known as the Four Species. The two are held together and shaken in six directions to symbolize that God is everywhere

Ushpizin:

the Aramaic word for “guests” and refers to the custom of inviting biblical guests into the sukkah to teach spiritual lessons. It’s also customary to invite friends and family to celebrate and share a meal in the sukkah.

Building the sukkah is a mitzvah, or commandment, and any mitzvah can be enhanced by beautifying the objects used to fulfill it.

Additional Resources

Books for Children:

The Big Sukkah by Peninnah Schram

Sammy Spider’s First Sukkot by Sylvia A. Rouss

Books for Adults:

Jewish Living by Mark Washofsky

The Jewish Festivals by Hayyim Schauss

PJ Library has a variety of resources, including more children’s book options, instructions for building and decorating sukkahs, and more.

Still have questions?

For more information about Yom Kippur (including opportunities to attend services in the Atlanta area), interfaith events and programs around Atlanta, and the JFGA’s Interfaith Connector, contact Doug Konkel at dkonkel@jewishatlanta.org

