A PJ LIBRARY FAMILY GUIDE FOR STARTING THE JEWISH NEW YEAR

A TIME TO GROW

PJ Library
BLESSING FOR SITTING IN THE SUKKAH

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha’olam, asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu leishev basukkah.

Dear God, Creator of our world, thank You for this special opportunity to sit in the sukkah.

When eating in the sukkah for the first time this year, also add the following blessing:

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha’olam, shehecheyanu vekiyemanu vehigi’anu lazman hazeh.

Dear God, Creator of our world, thank You for keeping us alive so we can celebrate this important moment.
WASHING HANDS & EATING CHALLAH

As on Rosh Hashanah, it is traditional to dip challah in honey for Sukkot. Keep bringing in the sweetness of a new year!

For blessings on washing hands and eating challah, see page 20.

SHAKING THE LULAV AND ETROG

It’s customary to shake a lulav and etrog in the sukkah on each morning of Sukkot. But shaking any time of day is fine, especially if you’re all gathered together for a festive meal.

Hold the lulav in your right hand and the etrog in your left hand with the tip of the etrog pointing toward the ground. Bring the lulav and etrog together so they’re touching and say this blessing:

ברוך אמתה אלוהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצוותיו וציוו
על נטילת לולב.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha’olam, asher kideshanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu al netilat lulav.

Dear God, Creator of our world, thank You for this opportunity to shake the lulav.

Flip the etrog so its tip points upward, and now you’re ready to shake. Hold the lulav and etrog in front of you and shake it. Then hold it to your right, and shake. Then hold it behind you (over your shoulder), and shake. Then hold it to your left, and shake. Then raise it way up toward the sky, and shake. And finally, point it down toward the ground, and shake.

Visit pjlibrary.org/sukkot for a video guide.
SUKKOT ACTIVITIES

Sukkot is a time to gather and celebrate. Here are suggested activities your family can do in a sukkah (or in your house) to make this week a “time of joy” — in your family’s own unique way.

INVITE REAL GUESTS …
Sukkot is a wonderful time to host guests or be a guest. What family or friends can you get together with? Is there someone you’ve never invited over before or someone new to your community or neighborhood? Everyone enjoys eating in a sukka — and everyone enjoys a little holiday hospitality.

AND IMAGINARY GUESTS
The first “sukkah” in Jewish history was built by Abraham and Sarah, the first Jews. They lived in the wilderness in a tent that was open on all sides to welcome travelers passing by. On Sukkot we return the favor: In a custom called ushpizin (Aramaic for “guests”), we invite Abraham and Sarah into our sukkah along with other legendary figures of the Jewish past.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES
Try making a new dish to serve at home or bring as a guest. For recipe ideas, visit pjlibrary.org/sukkot. Videoconference with relatives or friends who live far away (and maybe you haven’t spoken to in a while). Welcome them virtually into your sukkah or to your table to reconnect.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES
Go around the table discussing this question: If you could invite anyone from the past or the present (or even from a book or movie) as a guest for a meal in a sukkah, who would you invite? Why them? For extra fun, dress up as a surprise guest and show up at your own table. Have someone interview you!
SONGS, TOASTS & MORE
In ancient Israel, people made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem during Sukkot, coming from near and far to bring part of their harvest to the Temple. On the streets, people would juggle flaming torches, do handstands, play instruments, and dance and sing, causing the rabbis to say, “If you haven’t seen this celebration, you’ve never experienced true joy.” Sukkot is a special opportunity for your family to party together!

FAMILY ACTIVITIES
Prepare song sheets so everyone has the lyrics. Pass them around and start singing! Make a playlist with your favorite dance songs (visit pjlibrary.org/grow for some ready-to-go dance mixes) and shake your body like a lulav and etrog! Make toasts on grape juice (“L’chaim! To life!”). Or go mellow—have a game night or a candlelit story hour. Read a PJ Library book while cuddling in the sukkah (a couch works too).

STARGAZING AND SLEEPOVERS
A sukkah’s roof lets us see the night sky with a full moon and stars. (Stars helped the Israelites navigate their journey through the desert wilderness.) Any evening that’s not too cloudy or wet could be a good night for stargazing.

The last day of Sukkot has a special name. Hoshana Rabbah (basically, Hebrew for “help is on the way”). In ancient times, people would march around the Temple in Jerusalem holding the lulav and etrog, wishing for rain and good things in the year ahead. It also became customary to stay up through the night learning together. Then on the following morning—in a dramatic finale—it’s traditional to hit willow boughs from the lulav against the ground until all the leaves fall off, symbolizing a final farewell to our bad actions from the past year.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES
Pick a night for stargazing with family or friends. Combine it with a final-night sleepover, in a sukkah or in the house. In the morning, take the willow boughs from your lulav (if you have one) and hit them against the ground!