



Tips on Inviting Someone to Your Succah

🌿 The Opportunity

Share the beautiful and fascinating mitzvos of Succos with a not-yet frum Jew(s) by inviting them for a meal or a snack in your succah. The unique and relaxed nature of Chol HaMoed offers an opportunity for a rich Jewish experience without the sometimes difficult restrictions presented by Shabbos and Yom Tov.

🌿 The Invite

Identify someone in your life you can invite: a neighbor, co-worker, friend, relative, doctor, or anyone unaffiliated. Then call, email or ask them in person. Best to invite them for a meal, but you can invite people for dessert, music and/or a party in the succah such as a simchas beis hashoeva.

🌿 Yarmulkes

Have yarmulkes available for your male guests. Easy approach: “Can I get you a kippah/yarmulke to wear in the succah?” They will see this as a sign of respect for the holiday, rather than a commitment or burden, so don’t be afraid to offer.

🌿 Invitation to Wash

If you are serving bread, mention that it is customary to wash before eating bread and invite your guests to wash. We have included a Netilas Yadayim card with the transliterated blessing that allows your guest to make a bracha without feeling uncomfortable. Place it near your sink. Make sure to very simply explain the washing process which entails: washing your hands with a cup (twice right, twice left), saying the blessing, drying your hands,



sitting down and waiting quietly until the blessing over the bread is said and everyone eats a piece. Mention that it is proper to remain silent between the washing and the eating since it is considered a continuous act. Introduce with a joke: “Whoever likes to talk the Most . . . Wash Last!!” They can answer amen to your bracha on leyshevy ba’succah as well.

🍷 Divrei Torah/Ruach

Depending upon your guest(s), their comfort level, prior knowledge, etc., you can choose to lead a few traditional songs and/or say a short dvar Torah. Have NCSY Bentchers (with transliteration) on hand. If you would like to purchase one of these bentchers, you can find them at your local Judaica store or at www.artscroll.com.

🍷 Bentching

At the end of the meal, introduce the concept of bentching. Most people have heard of Grace after Meals. Say that these words express our gratitude for the food we ate. Depending on your guest, you may choose to sing the first paragraph together and finish the rest silently on your own. Use your best judgment to determine their comfort level.

🍷 Added Touch

Send your guest home with a meaningful gift that will extend the experience and inspiration even further. As an example, a homemade raisin challah.

🍷 Success

If you invite someone you have already succeeded! It will affect them, enhance your relationship and leave a lasting impression on them in and of itself. If they come, you’ve brought them a step closer to Hashem and this will of course positively affect them and their family.

🍷 Eitzah Tova

Don’t try too hard or think you have to do too much. The experience and the warmth of your family will do the job! We have included explanations of all the mitzvos/minhagim of the holiday. Share them if appropriate, particularly in response to questions.



Explaining Succos Concepts

The Festival of Succos (Chag Ha'Succos)

Jewish festivals are not simply days when we commemorate events that happened to our people thousands of years ago, rather each festival is also an opportunity for spiritual growth.

Succos is called “zman simchaseinu” – the season of our joy. The mitzvos of the festival teach us how to bring more joy into our lives. We try to incorporate this joy into the rest of the year.

The Succah

Our Rabbis tell us that joy rests on the heart of man when free from worry. How do we achieve this?

Every human being has a need to feel secure. Often we attribute our security to our physical possessions – our money, our jobs, or the sturdy walls and roofs of our homes. Since we are not in control of the material environment, as illustrated by this year's sudden economic downturn, this can actually cause us more anxiety, rather than bring us the security we are hoping for.

Succos is an opportunity to transcend our anxiety.

To reassure them, and ultimately us, that real security comes from Above, our ancestors were instructed to dwell in makeshift booths as they crossed the desert after leaving Egypt. Although they slept in flimsy huts, they knew they were not alone and they were unafraid.

On Succos, we too leave the four walls of our homes and sit outside beneath the stars. We get a chance to experience the awesomeness of the world around us and a sense of the Almighty's presence and love for us. This gives us a deep sense of comfort and a feeling of joy. We eat and sing and take pleasure in the gift of life that we were given.

The Four Species (The Arba Minim)

Along with dwelling in the succah, one of the main mitzvos of Succos is to “wave” the four species or “shake the lulav.” To carry out the mitzvah of lulav you hold and shake a palm frond together with an esrog, myrtle branches and willow branches.

What do we learn from this mitzvah?

Our tradition teaches that the four species represent four different types of Jews:

1. The esrog has a good taste and a good fragrance, representing a person with both wisdom and good deeds.
2. The hadas (myrtle) has a good fragrance, but has no taste, representing a person who has good deeds, but lacks wisdom.
3. The lulav (date palm) has taste (the dates), but no smell. This represents the person with wisdom, but without good deeds.
4. The aravah (willow) has neither taste nor smell, representing a person with neither good deeds nor wisdom.

On Succos, we gather these four species and wave them all together. The mitzvah is completed only if all four species are taken together. If one of the species, even the willow, is missing, the entire lulav shaking is invalid.

On Succos we all come together into the succah - with our strengths and weaknesses - recognizing the value and uniqueness of every individual. When we see each other as one family, when we unite as brothers and sisters, we are able to feel a much greater sense of joy and fullness in our lives.

Decorations

Whenever possible we beautify mitzvos in Judaism: a lovely menorah, an elegant mezuzah, a fragrant and shapely esrog. In all of these cases we beautify the mitzvos to show how much we treasure the opportunity to carry them out. We decorate the succah for similar reasons.

Prominent Guests (Ushpizin)

One of the customs of Succos is to invite the “Ushpizin”, seven of our greatest ancestors, as “guests” into the succah with us – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aharon, Joseph and David.

What is the meaning of this custom?

These seven guests each represent a different character trait. For example, Abraham represents kindness, Isaac represents self-control, Jacob represents honesty and truth, etc.

The lesson is this – the more complete we are spiritually, the more joy we have in life. For example, when we are giving, disciplined and truthful, we are fuller human beings and are more able to appreciate the pleasures that life offers. On the other hand, when we are lacking any of these characteristics, we are less in touch with the goodness of life. When we invite our forefathers to join us in the succah, we internalize and develop the traits they were known for and are able to feel the fullest sense of joy.



Netilas Yadayim

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם.

Baruch atah Adonoy, Eloheinu, melech ha-olam
Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the Universe

אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ

asher kidishanu b'mitz'votav v'tzivanu
Who has sanctified us with His commandments
and commanded us

עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

al n'tilas yadayim.
to wash our hands.

PROJECT
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