

סוכות שלימות

SUKKOT SHLEIMUT WITH WHOLENESS AND PEACEFULNESS

Sukkot, the Jewish harvest holiday of the “huts,” is a week of celebration that starts five days after Yom Kippur. Rabbinic tradition tells us a **sukkah**, or temporary structure with at least three sides and a roof of thatch or branches, represents the dwellings the Israelites built and lived in during their 40 years of wandering in the desert.

At times, we may feel like we’re wandering in the desert, not knowing what will come next. But on Sukkot, we are commanded to find joy and holiness, despite the fear uncertainty brings. This year many of us won’t have an opportunity to sit in a sukkah, or be able to attend synagogue in a traditional way, but that doesn’t mean we can’t celebrate the holiday and use the teachings of Sukkot to strengthen our resilience and mental well-being.

Make your own lulav and etrog

On Sukkot we shake one fruit and three species (palm, willow and myrtle branches), together, each representing something unique. We often refer to these four species as the lulav and etrog. According to **Sefer ha'Chinuch** (#285), each of the four relates to a particular body part that we can use to connect with the holy and with a value.

Using the printable pieces below (full sizes at end of resource), you can create your own lulav and etrog. You also can simply use construction paper. Write your answers to the questions below on the corresponding pieces of the paper lulav and etrog you create. Feel free to decorate!



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In Jewish Tradition:

- Etrog refers to the heart and to both understanding and wisdom.
Take a moment to reflect on when you have acted compassionately this past year. Think of one action you are proud of and write it down. Now think of one time this year another person has treated you with understanding and kindness, and write that down as well.
- Palm symbolizes the backbone and uprightness.
Take a moment to reflect on those moments in our lives when we have had to be steadfast and unbreaking even in the face of adversity. What has challenged you this year? When have you risen to that challenge? Write that down.
- Myrtle corresponds to the eyes and enlightenment.
Take a moment to reflect and look inward. What is one thing you have learned this year, perhaps because of your heart and backbone experiences? Write it down.
- Willow represents the lips and prayer.
Take this moment to set a **kavanah**, or intention. Write down a prayer/wish/hope you have for the upcoming months. It can be for you, a loved one, or for the entire world. Say it outloud to yourself, or mouth it silently.

Now that you have your own unique lulav and etrog, let's shake them!

WAVING THE LULAV AND ETROG AS PART OF WHOLENESS & PEACEFULNESS - שלימות - SHLEIMUT

Shleimut is a state of being in which you feel physically, mentally and spiritually harmonious. Mindfulness and meditation are skills we use to help us enter this peaceful state and learn to be present. In this way, shleimut can strengthen our mental wellness. The focus of both mindfulness and meditation is being present and engaged in what we are feeling in this moment. This year we encourage you to shake your homemade lulav and etrog slowly, deliberately and mindfully.

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Shaking the lulav and etrog

DO Start by facing east. Stand comfortably and take a few deep breaths.

THINK Try to clear your mind by focusing on what it feels like to have your feet on the ground and to hold what you created. If thoughts enter your mind, that's okay; acknowledge them, and bring your focus back to what it feels like to be in this moment.

DO Hold the lulav out to the east (in front of you) and shake it three times. Each time, the motion of shaking should be drawing into you: Reach out and draw in, reach out and draw in, reach out and draw in. You can do this at any pace.

THINK Consider the kavanah you chose above, the prayer/wish/hope you created. Repeat it to yourself out loud or in your head.

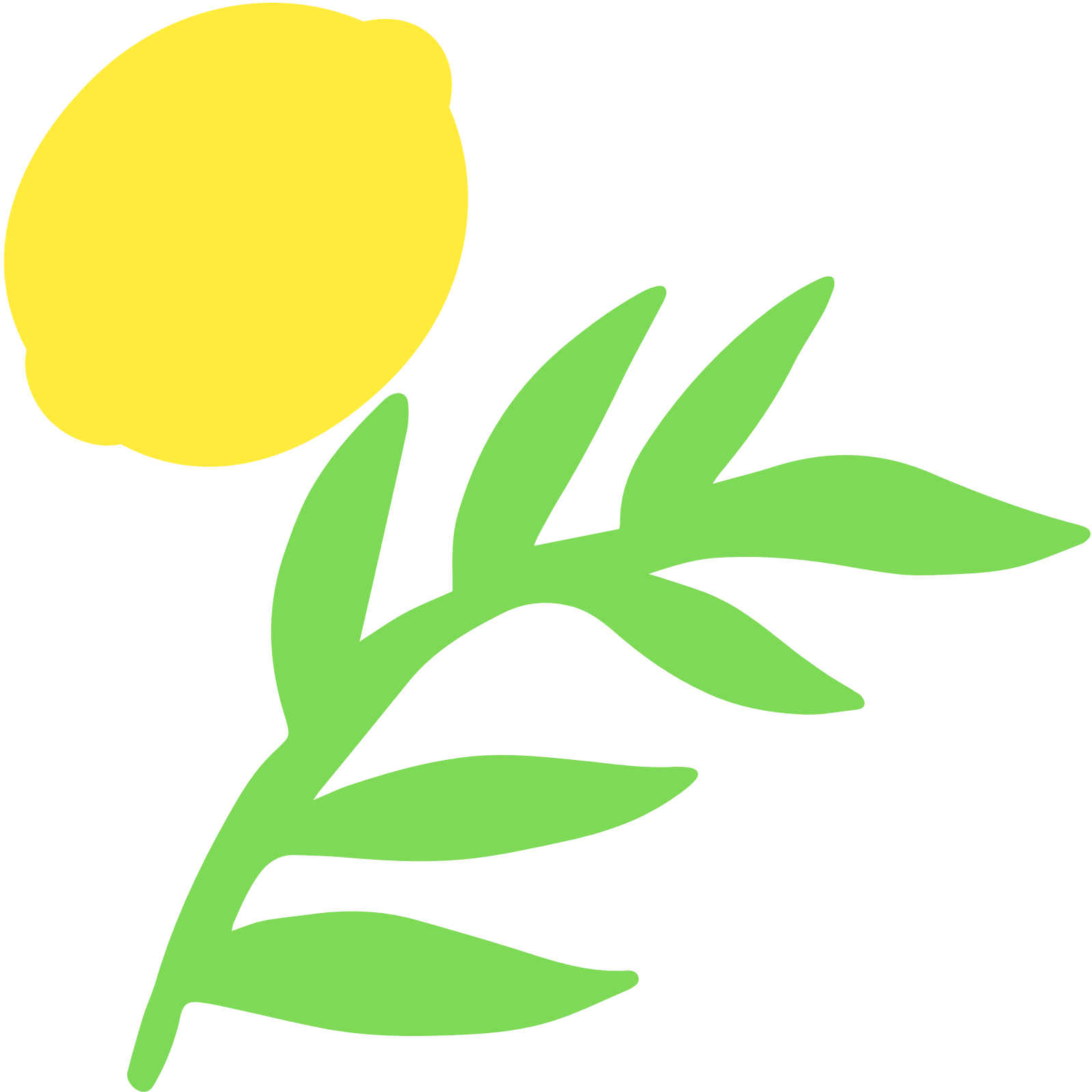
DO Repeat the same motion of reaching out with the lulav and then drawing it in toward you three times to your right (south), three times behind you over your right shoulder (west), three times to your left (north), raising it upward three times, and lowering it downward three times.

THINK With each motion, envision yourself bringing in what you most need in order to feel whole and supported.

We hope the teachings of Sukkot bring you **shleimut**, wholeness and peacefulness, and that you have a happy and healthy holiday. Moadim L'simcha!

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