



Because learning Torah is sweet

HADAR
Children & Families



סוכות
Sukkot



ט"ו-כ"א תשרי תשפ"ז

September 25–October 2, 2026



תפילה • Prayer

Each day of Sukkot, we say Hoshanot, prayers to God for help, centered around the words הוֹשֵׁעַ נָא (hosha na, "please save us").

These words come from a verse in Tehillim (118:25) that we say in Hallel:

אָנָּה ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָא.
"Please, God, save us."

When we say Hoshanot, the אָרוֹן קֹדֶשׁ (aron kodesh, ark) is opened, and a Torah scroll is brought to the place where it is read. Everyone takes their lulav and etrog and walks in a circle around the Torah (Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayyim 660:1).

The Hoshanot prayers follow an alef-bet pattern, with each line beginning with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Each day of Sukkot has its own Hoshanot. The seventh day of Sukkot is called Hoshana Rabbah ("the big Hoshana"), and on that day we circle the Torah seven times!

- Why would we circle the Torah and hold the lulav and etrog while asking God to save us? How does this shape our understanding of what it means to shake a lulav and etrog?
- Sukkot is a time for joy! Why would it also be the time we ask, over and over, to be saved? How does this connect Sukkot with Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?

הוֹשֵׁעַ נָא לְמַעַנְךָ בּוֹרְאֵנוּ הוֹשֵׁעַ נָא.
Please save us, for Your sake, our Creator.
Please save us.

הוֹשֵׁעַ נָא לְמַעַנְךָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוֹשֵׁעַ נָא.
Please save us, for Your sake, our God.
Please save us.



הוֹשֵׁעַ נָא לְמַעַנְךָ דּוֹרְשָׁנוּ הוֹשֵׁעַ נָא.
Please save us, for Your sake, the One
Who seeks us out. Please save us.

הוֹשֵׁעַ נָא לְמַעַנְךָ גּוֹאֲלֵנוּ הוֹשֵׁעַ נָא.
Please save us, for Your sake, our Redeemer.
Please save us.



מִשְׁנָה • Mishnah

The Mishnah describes the way Sukkot was observed in the בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ (Beit HaMikdash, Holy Temple in Yerushalayim):

Mishnah Sukkah 4:5

How was the mitzvah of the aravah (willow) branches performed?

There was a place below Yerushalayim called Motza. People would go there and gather large aravah branches. They would bring them to the Beit HaMikdash and stand them around the mizbei'ah (altar), with the tops of the branches bending over it.

The shofar was sounded.

Every day of Sukkot, they would circle the mizbei'ah once and say: "Please, God, save us. Please, God, bring us success"

(Tehillim 118:25) ...

משנה סוכה ד:ה

מִצְוַת עֲרֵבָה כִּיצַד?

מָקוֹם הָיָה לְמִטָּה מִירוּשָׁלַיִם, וְנִקְרָא מוֹצָא. לְיֹרְדֵיו לָשֶׁם וּמִלְקָטִין מִשָּׁם מִרְבֵּיּוֹת שֶׁל עֲרֵבָה, וּבָאִין וְזוֹקְפִין אוֹתָן בְּצִדֵּי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, וְרֹאשֵׁיהֶן כְּפּוֹפִין עַל גְּבִי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ.

תִּקְעוּ וְהִרְעוּ וְתִקְעוּ.

בְּכָל יוֹם מְקִיפִין אֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ פַּעַם אַחַת, וְאוֹמְרִים, "אֲנָּה ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא, אֲנָּה ה' הַצְלִיחָה נָּא." ...



On the seventh day of Sukkot, aka Hoshana Rabbah, they would circle the mizbei'ah seven times.

וְאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם מְקִיפִין אֶת הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ
שִׁבְעַת פְּעָמִים.

When they finished, they would say: "Beauty is yours, O mizbei'ah! Beauty is yours, O mizbei'ah!"

בְּשַׁעַת פְּטִירָתוֹ, מָה הָיוּ אוֹמְרִים,
לְפָנֶי לַד' מִזְבִּיחַ, לְפָנֶי לַד' מִזְבִּיחַ.

- ♦ What's the meaning of circling around the mizbei'ah while praying to be saved? What would this make us feel about the mizbe'ah?
- ♦ If they would circle the mizbei'ah seven times on Hoshana Rabbah, what does that tell us about that day?
- ♦ What was beautiful about the mizbei'ah? Why is it important to praise it for its beauty, especially on Hoshana Rabbah?

Mishnah Sukkah 4:6

משנה סוכה ד:ו

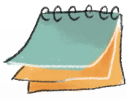
R. Yohanan ben Berokah says: People would bring palm branches and strike them on the ground beside the mizbei'ah. Because of this, the day was called "The Day of Beating the Branches."

רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן בְּרוּקָה אוֹמֵר: חֲרִיטוֹת
שֶׁל דָּקֵל הָיוּ מְבִיאִין, וְחוֹבְטִין
אוֹתוֹ בְּקֶרְקַע בְּצִדֵּי הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ, וְאוֹתוֹ
הַיּוֹם נִקְרָא יוֹם חֲבוּט חֲרִיטוֹת.

Today, Hoshana Rabbah looks a bit like what R. Yohanan ben Berokah describes. After saying the last Hoshanot in the morning there are prayers for rain, and then many communities take bundles of aravah branches and strike them on the ground (Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayyim 664:4). (More about that on the next page!)

- ♦ Why is it important to perform rituals that remind us of the Beit HaMikdash? What might Sukkot have to do with the Beit HaMikdash?
- ♦ Why is rain so important to pray for? At the end of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot—after all the prayers we make all month long—why is rain the final thing we pray for?
- ♦ Now that there's no Beit HaMikdash or mizbei'ah, what's special about the tradition of striking the bundles of aravah branches on the ground on Hoshana Rabbah?





בְּנֵי דִּיקּוּא • The Calendar

On Hoshana Rabbah, the last day of Sukkot, we beat aravah branches on the ground. Why?

A midrash teaches that the אַרְבַּע מִינִים (arba minim, four species) on Sukkot represent different kinds of Jewish people all coming together (Vayikra Rabbah 30:12):

The אֶתְרוֹג (etrog), which has both taste and fragrance, represents people who have both Torah and good deeds.

The לוּלָב (lulav), which has taste but no fragrance, represents people who have Torah but not many good deeds.

The הֶדֶס (hadas), which has fragrance but no taste, represents people who have good deeds but not much Torah.

The עֲרַבָּה (aravah), which has neither taste nor fragrance, represents people who have neither Torah nor good deeds.

So why is the aravah so special on Hoshana Rabbah?

ספר התודעה, הושענא רבה R. Eliyahu Ki Tov (Poland and Israel, 75 years ago)

The aravah branch that we take on Hoshana Rabbah also symbolizes tefillah (prayer). The aravah looks like a mouth and lips, and it represents Jews who may not have much Torah learning or many good deeds. On Hoshana Rabbah, we set aside the other species and say: We may not have much Torah or many good deeds; we no longer have the etrog or lulav or hadas.

We are all like this aravah. So what do we have? A mouth to pray with, like this aravah, which is similar to a mouth.

הָעֲרַבָּה שְׁנוּטִלִים בְּאוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם לְאַחַר שְׁמִנִּיחִין
אֶת הָאֶתְרוֹג וְהַלוּלָב, רוֹמֶזֶת אֵף הִיא לְתַפִּלָּה.
שָׁכַבְר נֶאֱמַר לְמַעַל בְּעֵינֵינוּ זֶה שֶׁהָעֲרַבָּה דּוֹמָה
לִפֶּה וְלִשְׁפָּתַיִם, וְהִיא כְּנֶגֶד אֱלֹה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל
שֶׁאִין בָּהֶם לֹא תוֹרָה וְלֹא מִצְוֹת וְלֹא מַעֲשִׂים
טוֹבִים. עֲכָשִׁיו מִנִּיחִים אֶת כָּל הָאֲגוּד שֶׁאֲרַבֵּעַ
כְּתוּת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל נִתְאָדָּו יַחַד, וְאוֹמְרִים: אֵין
בָּנוּ טַעַם תוֹרָה וְלֹא רִיחַ מִצְוֹת,
לֹא אֶתְרוֹג וְלֹא לוּלָב
וְלֹא הֶדֶס – כְּלָנוּ
דּוֹמִים לְעֲרַבָּה
זוֹ. וְיָמָּה יֵשׁ
לָנוּ? פֶּה
לְהַתְפַּלֵּל,
כְּעֲרַבָּה זוֹ
שְׂדוּמָה לִפֶּה.

• We've done a lot of praying this Tishrei! Why is it important to have another day dedicated to tefillah now, at the end of Sukkot? What does it mean that the last thing we are left with, after we no longer shake the lulav (or blow the shofar for that matter) is prayer?

