

# NCYI Youth Groups Sukkos Guide

## ABCs of Sukkot

by [Rabbi Shraga Simmons](#)

### Guidelines for the joyous Jewish outdoor festival.

Following on the heels of the High Holidays is Sukkot, a seven-day festival (8 days in the Diaspora) characterized by the outdoor Sukkah-huts that we sit in, and the "Four Species" of plants waved together each day.

Sukkot is a holiday of immense joy, where we express our complete trust in God, and celebrate our confidence in having received a "good judgment" for the coming year.

Throughout the week of Sukkot, we eat, sleep and socialize in a Sukkah, reminding us that:

- The Israelites lived in huts during the 40 years of wandering in the desert.
- God is our ultimate protection -- just as He protected the Israelites in the desert with the Clouds of Glory (Exodus 13:21).

### The Four Species

On Sukkot, we are commanded to wave the Four Species, each noted for its special beauty:

- Esrog – the citron, a fragrant fruit with a thick, white rind. It is often picked from the tree while green, and then ripens to a bright yellow.
- Lulav – the palm branch, which is defined in beauty by having a straight shape and leaves tightly bound.
- Hadas – the myrtle branch, which has a beautiful plated pattern of three leaves coming out from the same point in the branch.
- Arava – the willow branch, which should have oblong leaves with a smooth edge.

We bind all the branches together -- two willows on the left, one palm branch in the center, and three myrtles on the right. We then lift them together with the Esrog and shake it in all directions, as a symbol of God's mastery over all Creation.

The Four Species are waved each day (except for Shabbat) in the synagogue, during the recitation of the Hallel prayers of praise. Hallel is followed by *Hoshanot*, where everyone circles a Torah scroll held on the Bima.

It is a special tradition to "beautify" this mitzvah by getting the nicest species available. At the very least, there are specific requirements to be valid for the mitzvah. Since the details are many and technical, it is not recommended to search through the forest on your own for these species! (Particularly the Esrog, which can easily be confused with a lemon.) Purchase a complete set from a reliable distributor; your local Jewish bookstore should have a "Four Species Set" with a rabbinical seal certifying their validity.

## **The Sukkah Hut**

Building your own Sukkah is a great activity to share with your family and friends. The Sukkah must be at least 27 inches by 27 inches square. It can be built in a yard, apartment balcony, or even on the back of an elephant.

Your Sukkah needs at least two complete walls and a small part of a third wall. The walls can be of any material, as long as they are sturdy enough to withstand a normal wind. The walls should be at least 38 inches high (96 cm), but not higher than 30 feet (9.6 m).

You don't have to build walls especially for the Sukkah; you can use the side of a building, or even a hedge of bushes. And if you can find an area that is already enclosed by 2 or 3 walls, then your job will be that much easier!

The roof material (*S'chach*) must be made from material that grows from the ground -- i.e. branches or leaves (but not metal). If you're using unfinished boards, they cannot be wider than 15 inches. Also, the material must be presently detached from the ground. This means that nothing can be overhanging your Sukkah -- not a tree, a gutter, air-conditioning unit, etc.

The roof must be sufficiently covered so that it gives more shade than sun during the daytime, yet it should be sufficiently open so that the stars are visible through the roof at night. The roof material can only be added after the requisite number of walls are in place.

Since the Sukkah is designated as your "home" for the next seven days, it is customary to decorate it nicely. Many people hang fruits and flowers from the ceiling, and tape posters of Jerusalem and other Jewish themes on the walls.

It is also traditional to "welcome" the seven shepherds of Israel (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moshe, Aaron, Joseph and David) as guests (*ushpizin*) into one's Sukkah throughout the festival.

## **More Sukkot Traditions**

It is a special mitzvah to rejoice on Sukkot. To this end, the intermediate days of Sukkot are marked by celebrations called *Simchat Beit HaSho'eva*, commemorating the water libations that were offered during Sukkot in the Holy Temple.

Sukkot is closely connected to "water," as it is the day of universal judgment with regard to the blessings of rain and irrigation for the coming year.

Sukkot is also a time of universal blessing for all peoples -- symbolized by the 70 additional offerings brought in the Temple, corresponding to the 70 nations of the world.

The Book of Ecclesiastes, written by King Solomon, is read on Shabbat during Sukkot. The theme of Ecclesiastes is the folly of pursuing temporal pleasures of this world, as opposed to more eternal spiritual pursuits. Indeed, the Sukkah's flimsy construction reminds us that material possessions are transient.

The seventh day of Sukkot is called Hoshana Rabba, which features seven circuits around the bima, with the Four Species in hand. The procession culminates with the beating of the willow branch. Hoshana Rabba is known as the day of the final sealing of judgment which began on Rosh Hashana. On Hoshana Rabba, some have the custom to read the Book of Deuteronomy and stay up all night studying Torah.

## **Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah**

Immediately following Sukkot is one more holiday called Shmini Atzeret, literally the "Eighth Day of Assembly." This is a time to cease the busy activity of the holiday season and simply savor the special relationship with the Almighty before heading out into the long winter season. It is a separate holiday from Sukkot, meaning that the She'hecheyanu blessing is recited, and the obligation to sit in the Sukkah does not apply.

On Shmini Atzeret, Yizkor is recited in the synagogue.

The next day is Simchat Torah, which celebrates the completion -- and new beginning -- of the annual Torah reading cycle. In the synagogue, all the Torah scrolls are taken out of the Ark, and the congregation dances "seven circuits" amidst great joy and song. [Click here for the text and audio recordings of the most popular Simchat Torah melodies.](#)

In Israel, Simchat Torah is held the same day as Shmini Atzeret.

*Wishing you a joyful Sukkot!*

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This article can also be read at: <http://www.aish.com/h/su/dits/62549892.html>

## The Story of Sukkos

### Festival Of Ingathering

[http://www.chabad.org/kids/article\\_cdo/aid/4603/jewish/Festival-Of-Ingathering.htm](http://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/4603/jewish/Festival-Of-Ingathering.htm)

*Sukkot* is the Festival of Ingathering; it is the time when the produce of the field, orchard and vineyard is gathered in. The granaries, threshing floors and wine and olive-presses are full to capacity. Weeks and months of toil and sweat put into the soil have finally been amply rewarded. The farmer feels happy and elated. No wonder *Sukkot* is "the Season of Rejoicing."

At such a time of material success, there is the danger of man "waxing fat and kicking; forsaking G-d, his Maker." Finding his work so successfully rewarded, he may think that "my power and the strength of my hand have made me all this wealth." There is also the danger of his thinking that to work and amass a fortune is

the whole purpose of life, forgetting that there are greater and higher values in life-spiritual values.

Lest the Jew forget his real purpose in life, G-d, in His infinite wisdom and loving-kindness, bade us leave our comfortable homes at this time, and dwell in a frail *sukkah* for seven days. The *sukkah* reminds us that we rely on G-d for protection, for the *sukkah* is no fortress, not even providing a solid roof over our heads. It reminds us also that life on this earth is but a temporary dwelling.

The seven days of *Sukkot*, each represent a decade of life, seventy years in all, the human life span on this earth. This short life-span should be considered only as a period of preparation for the everlasting life that comes after life on this earth, a life where material wealth does not count, where only spiritual wealth counts. The stores of grain, wine and oil must be left behind, while only the stores of Torah, *mitzvot* and Good Deeds can be taken along and put to good advantage in that everlasting life.

This is also one of the reasons why it is customary, in some congregations, to read the Book of Ecclesiastes (*Kohelet*) during the Festival of *Sukkot*. In some congregations it is read in the synagogue on *Shabbat chol hamoed Sukkot*. For the Book of *Kohelet*, prophetically written by the Wisest of All men, King Solomon, is full of earnest thoughts and reflections on the "vanity of vanities" of this world. It fittingly concludes with the words, "The end of the matter after all is heard, is: Fear G-d and keep His commandments, for this is the whole purpose of man."

In this way, *Sukkot* for us is the "Festival of Ingathering" in a deeper sense: it teaches us to gather, retain and store up the religious experiences and spiritual uplift which we have acquired during the many and varied festivals, prayers and *mitzvot* of the month of *Tishrei*, so that we can draw upon these rich stores throughout the whole year to come.

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## **Festival of Tabernacles**

[http://www.chabad.org/kids/article\\_cdo/aid/4602/jewish/Festival-of-Tabernacles.htm](http://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/4602/jewish/Festival-of-Tabernacles.htm)

A joyful period is ushered in by the festival of *Sukkot* that compensates for the solemn period of the *yomim noraim*. *Sukkot* is "the season of our rejoicing.,, On *Sukkot* we have a *mitzvah* that is truly unique, for the Sukkah is the only *mitzvah* that literally encompasses us, as we walk into it.

The *sukkah* reminds us of the "Clouds of Glory" that surrounded our people during their wandering through the desert on the way to the Promised Land. Everybody then saw the special Divine protection that G-d bestowed upon them during those difficult years.

But although the "Clouds of Glory" disappeared in the fortieth year, on the eve of their entry into the Land of Israel, we have never ceased to believe that G-d gives us His own protection, and that is why we have outlived our greatest enemies in all generations.

We know of course that we enjoy this Divine protection only as long as we remain loyal Jews, faithful to our G-d and our Torah. This explains why we have *Simchat Torah* (rejoicing with our Torah) at the end of the *Sukkot* festival... But more about this day later!

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## Hoshana Rabba

[http://www.chabad.org/kids/article\\_cdo/aid/4344/jewish/Hoshana-Rabba.htm](http://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/4344/jewish/Hoshana-Rabba.htm)

The seventh day of *Sukkot* is called *Hoshana Rabba* (Great Hoshana).

On the night of *Hoshana Rabba* it is customary to stay awake, reciting the *tikkun* and Psalms.

During the morning service of *Hoshana Rabba*, after the *Hoshana* prayers, having marched with the *lulav* seven times around the Bimah, the "Four Kinds" are put away-, and the *Hoshanas* (willow-branches) are taken in their stead, and beaten upon the floor, while saying a special prayer.

# Questions and Answers

## Sukkos Questions According to the Aleph Beis

[By Chaim Baruch Kaufman from chinuch.org](http://chinuch.org)

### סוכות א-ב

א - Which Torah parsha has the mitzva of the arba minim?

.....אמור

ב - A poseik does this to the 4 minim to see if they are kosher or not

.....בודק

ג - The common term for when an esrog is thinner in the middle than on the ends.....גרמל

ד - Term for the side of a sukkah

.....דופן

ה - What tefilla is said while walking around the bima with the 4 minim?.....

הושע נא

ו - A tzadik's face was recently found on ancient coins in Egypt. He is the Ushpizin guest on yom \_\_\_\_\_  
.....ו

ז - The concept of Hidur Mitzvah comes from this phrase in the Torah.....זה א-לי ואנהו

ח - This is the term used to refer to hitting aravos on the ground on Hoshana Rabba.....חבטות

ט - The lulav has this quality to the senses which makes it represent people with Torah.....טעם

י - Schach is not kosher if made from a material that can become \_\_\_\_\_  
.....טמא

יא - When the tip of the lulav turns brown the lulav is posul because it is.....יבש

ב- The term the Torah uses to refer to lulav

.....**נפות תמרים**

ג- The word the Torah uses to teach that one must own the 4 minim on the first day of

Sukkos.....**לכם**

ד- This halachic term refers to when there is a gap in the sukkah wall or schach that is less than 3 tefachim, it is still kosher because of this

.....**לבוד**

ה- When the hadas has three leaves together at the same place on the branch it is

called.....**משולש**

ו- The Simchas Bais Hashoeva was in celebration of this

mitzvah.....**נסוך המים**

ז - When the top 2 leaves of the lulav are split apart, or when there is a cleft in the esrog, they are posul. Each is called a

.....**סדק**

ח - When the s'chach adjacent to the wall is posel we consider the wall to

be.....**עקומה**

ט - The term for the tip of an esrog that makes the esrog

mehudar.....**פיטם**

י - Rabbi Meir holds that a sukkah built on the back of this animal is kosher

.....**פיל**

יא - There should be more of this than sunlight coming through the

schach.....**צל**

יב - The balcony added to the BhM for the Simchas Bais Hashoeva was added to prevent

this.....**קלות ראש**

יג- The minimal shiur of what must be able to fit in the sukkah to make it

kosher.....**ראשו ורובו**

יד - the spine of a lulav is called

.....**שדרה**

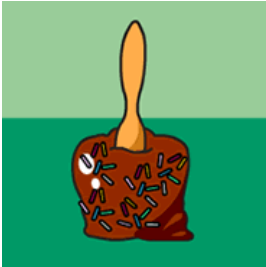
טו- The two middle and highest leaves of the lulav that are like twins that grow from the top of the spine..

.....**תיומת**

## Sukkos Recipe

from Chabad.org

### Sukkot Candy Apple



400 g chocolate  
6 small apples  
colored or chocolate sprinkles

You will also need:  
6 small wooden forks  
wax paper



Break the chocolate into pieces  
and put it in the microwave for 5 minutes on medium heat.

While the chocolate is melting, wash and dry the apples. Stick a wooden fork on  
the top of each  
apple.

Dip the apples into the  
chocolate. Let the excess drip.

Roll each apple in the sprinkles  
and put it on parchment paper.

Leave it in the refrigerator until it hardens.

# Sukkos Stories

## The Reward

[http://www.chabad.org/kids/article\\_cdo/aid/4782/jewish/The-Reward.htm](http://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/4782/jewish/The-Reward.htm)

Once upon a time there lived a very charitable man.

One day --it was *Hoshana Rabbah*-- his wife gave him ten *shekels* and asked him to go and buy something for their children. At that moment a collection was being made in the market place for a poor orphaned girl who was about to be married.

When the collectors saw this charitable person they said, "Here comes a very charitable man." They addressed themselves to him saying, "Will you take a share in this worthy cause, for we want to buy a present for the poor bride?"

The good man gave them all the ten Shekels he had. Now he was ashamed to return home empty handed, and so he went to the synagogue. There he found children playing with *etrogim*, for it was *Hoshana Rabba* (the seventh day of *Sukkot*) and there was no more need for the *etrogim*.

The good man collected a sack full of *etrogim* and went out to seek his fortune. Arriving in a strange land he sat down on his sack of *etrogim*, wondering what he was going to do next. Suddenly he was approached by the king's officers, who asked him what he had in that sack.

"I am a poor man and have nothing to sell," he replied. They opened his sack and found it was full of *etrogim*. "What kind of fruit is this?" the officers asked. "These are *etrogim*, a special fruit used by Jews during their festival of *Sukkot*."

When the officers heard that, they grabbed him and his sack and carried him all the way to the palace. It was then that our good man learned what all the excitement was about:

The king was very ill and he was told that only the fruit used by Jews during their festival of *Sukkot* could cure him. A very intensive search had yielded nothing, and

just when all hope seemed to be gone, this good man arrived with a sack full of *etrogim*, and thus saved the king's life.

The king recovered his health and ordered the sack emptied of the *etrogim* to be filled with golden *dinars*. Our good man now returned home richly rewarded for the charity he had been giving all his life.

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## **Dressed for Success: Sukkot Story for Kids**

by [Nesanel Yoel Safran](#)

This article can also be read at: <http://www.aish.com/h/su/dits/48970396.html>

**How would you feel if you were invited to the home of one of the richest families in the world?**

*Because some people are wealthier and have more than others, it's easy to forget that deep down we are really all equal. The holiday of Sukkot is a special time when God helps us to unite and melt our differences away. He asks everyone -- rich or poor -- to leave their homes for a week and dwell in an outdoor sukkah, a simple, temporary hut with a roof made out of branches. Being all under the 'same roof' of the sukkah is a mitzvah that helps us remember that we're all really equal and to treat each other with equal kindness and respect.*

*In this story, a kid gets an eye-opening Sukkot surprise.*

Mike sulked as he went through his closet for about the tenth time. How was he ever going to wear any of these junky clothes to visit someone so important?

He'd been feeling really excited and nervous ever since he got the invitation a couple of days ago from Jeremy, a new kid from his class, to come to his house for what he'd called a 'sukkah party.' Though he had heard of the holiday of Sukkot, Mike really didn't know too much about it.

But *whatever* the reason for the invite, Mike was happy. After all, it wasn't every day a regular kid like him got invited to spend time together with someone like Jeremy, whose father was a very wealthy and famous executive who was even on the cover of Time magazine. Mike had wanted to make the 'right' kind of impression by buying and wearing the latest new designer shoes and clothing -- but his mom had said no way.

"But mom," he'd pleaded, "rich, important people like Jeremy and his family aren't like we are. They won't even look at me if I'm dressed in plain, old clothes."

"I'm sorry, Mike but clothing like that just isn't in our budget," she'd said. "Besides I'm sure Jeremy doesn't want to be your friend because of your clothing. It's who you are inside that's important."

Seeing that there was no more room for argument, Mike put on his best pants and shirt, shined his old shoes, combed his hair, and hoped for the best.

Riding over on his bike, Mike was surprised to see that while the houses were somewhat bigger than average, they in no way resembled the huge mansions he had imagined Jeremy's neighborhood would include. Leaning his bike carefully up against the stone staircase, Mike's hand was a little sweaty as he knocked on the door. He was nervous to face the butler he was sure was waiting on the other side of the door for his arrival, and was surprised when his knock was answered by Jeremy's mom.

"Hi there. You must be Mike. We've heard so much about you from Jeremy and we're happy to meet you."

"Hey Mike!" Jeremy appeared behind his mother's shoulder and the two of them smiled at each other as they welcomed Mike inside the house.

*Their house is so regular, thought Mike. They probably keep it that way so their sukkah house can be really fancy. They must spend all their money on that.*

"C'mon in, I can't wait for you to see our sukkah. It's out back." Jeremy led him through the house, which was actually a lot bigger on the inside than it seemed to be from the outside. They finally came to a glass door that led out to a huge yard. In one corner, Mike could see a wooden shack with leaves spread all across the top.

"Hey what's that, the servants' quarters?" he asked.

Jeremy laughed. "No. We don't have any servants. My mom has a cleaning lady a few times a week but she doesn't live here."

"So what is that, then?"

"That's our sukkah!"

Mike opened the door to the wooden hut and his jaw dropped in surprise. He felt like he had stepped into another world, but not the way he thought it would be. Inside was a long table, beautifully set with all kinds of candy, cake and nosh. There were all kinds of decorations and fruits and artwork hanging from the walls and from the branches that he now saw from the inside formed an open air roof. Seated at the table were Jeremy's dad and two of his brothers, all reading from books with Hebrew letters. They all wore nice but simple clothing, and everyone looked very happy. Mike even felt a little overdressed.

Jeremy's dad stood up. "You must be Mike. Welcome to our sukkah. Would you like to make a blessing on the special etrog fruit and lulav branch? Then afterwards, you can sit down and eat some of these delicious treats. Sukkot is a time for being together and enjoying each other's company."

Mike couldn't get over how friendly and nice everyone was, and how comfortable he felt. Even though they were very wealthy, Jeremy and his family were regular people, just like his family. Under the leaves and the blue sky, he realized that deep down, people are all pretty much the same.

## **Questions**

### **Ages 3-5**

Q. How did Mike feel when he was first invited to Jeremy's house?

A. He felt nervous and that he had to look and act fancy for them to like him.

Q. How did he feel in the end?

A. He felt that they liked him and weren't really so different from him, after all.

### **Ages 6-9**

Q What do you think Mike learned that day?

A. He had thought that his wealthy friend and his family would be somehow 'different' from him and that he had to do things to impress them. His experience visiting them and seeing how down-to-earth they were, taught him that people, deep down are really all the same.

Q. What if Jeremy and his family had really acted snobby instead of so nice, would Mike then have been right to want to try to impress them?

A. God wants us to act humble and nice, no matter how much wealth or importance He gives us. Fortunately, Jeremy's family understood this. But even if they hadn't acted properly, Mike should remember that we are all equally precious in God's eyes and there is no reason to change who we are just to impress other people.

### **Ages ten and up**

Q. Why do you think God gives some people more and some people less?

A. We are all in this world to improve our character and grow spiritually. There are many ways to do this. For instance a poor person grows by remaining honest and not bitter despite his poverty; a rich person grows by remaining humble and considerate despite his wealth. God gives each of us the life situation our particular soul needs to grow maximally.

Q. What does it mean that we are all equal? How, if at all, is that different from being all the same?

A. The spiritual concept of equality means that we are all precious children of the One God and are all equally worthy of respect. It doesn't mean that we all have the same life mission to do. Each of us should look at our unique circumstances and talents and try to make the most of who we are rather than imitate someone else.

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This article can also be read at: <http://www.aish.com/h/su/dits/48970396.html>

## Cast Thy Bread Upon The Waters

[http://www.chabad.org/kids/article\\_cdo/aid/4777/jewish/Cast-Thy-Bread.htm](http://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/4777/jewish/Cast-Thy-Bread.htm)

One of the very wise sayings in the Book of Ecclesiastes is:

*Cast thy bread upon the waters, for you shall find it after many days...*

Which means: Always be ready to do a good turn even if you don't expect a reward for it. For, some day, you will surely find your reward waiting for you.

The following story is a very good illustration of this saying, you will agree.

Bar Kappara, one of the Tanaim who lived at the time of Rabbi Judah Hanassi, was once walking along the seashore of Caesaria, when he noticed a shipwreck in the distance. As he stood and looked, he saw a man swimming from the wreck towards the shore.

The man seemed to be making good headway and was obviously a good swimmer. But as soon as he reached land, he almost collapsed with weariness. Bar Kappara went forward and gave him a helping hand. The man staggered ashore and begged him to assist him. Bar Kappara took him home, clothed him, fed him and offered him some money so that the man went away refreshed and encouraged.

Some years later, the Jews of Caesaria found themselves in a predicament with the local authorities and decided to send a petition to the Governor. They chose Bar Kappara to go and speak on their behalf.

Bar Kappara prayed to G-d to guide him aright and help him succeed in his important mission.

When Bar Kappara reached the Governor's palace, he asked for permission to see the Governor, having come on a very urgent matter. When his request was granted, he was ushered into the presence of the Governor. To his great astonishment, Bar Kappara recognized him as the same man whom he had once saved and helped on the shores of Caesaria.

"What can I do for you, my friend?" the Governor greeted him warmly, recognizing Bar Kappara as his onetime "friend in need."

Bar Kappara earnestly begged the Governor to use his authority in helping the Jews, on whose behalf he had now come to plead.

The Governor listened carefully and patiently to the story Bar Kappara unfolded before him and then said:

"I will gladly do this favor for you, my friend, because when I was in such a desperate position you helped me to the maximum of your ability without asking for or expecting any reward. Because of your unselfishness and kindness to me, I shall now help your suffering brethren at your request."

Bar Kappara had brought a large sum of money as a gift to the Governor from his fellow-Jews. The Governor, however, gave the money back to Bar Kappara, saying:

"Take this money back as a gift from me now. For although the sum of money you gave me was not as great as this, to me it meant everything at the time of my need. You may return to your brethren and tell them that I am helping them out of gratitude to you, and take my blessing with you."

Bar Kappara joyfully hurried back with the good news to his fellow-Jews who were anxiously awaiting his return.

Great was the rejoicing among them at Bar Kappara's good tidings, and they all acknowledged how true was the saying of King Solomon:

"Cast thy bread upon the waters for you shall find it after many days."

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## **Sukkot In Far Away Communities**

[http://www.chabad.org/kids/article\\_cdo/aid/4778/jewish/Sukkot-Far-Away.htm](http://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/4778/jewish/Sukkot-Far-Away.htm)

### **Among The Caucasian Jews**

In the mountain region of the Caucasus, which is now part of the Soviet Union, Jews

have dwelt since very ancient times. There is, in fact, a tradition among the native Jews that they are descendants of the Ten Tribes, and that their ancestors came to live there after the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes was destroyed by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria.

There is also a small number of European Jews who came to live there within the last one hundred years. Among them were some Lubavitcher Chassidim who were sent there by their Rabbi to open *yeshivot* and Talmud Torahs. Thus, there was a Lubavitcher *yeshivah* in the town of Kutais. In that city, as well as in the city of Tiflis, most of the Jews live. Their number is about 25,000. They speak an old dialect of Georgian; they are engaged in trade and crafts, and generally look like the non-Jewish population.

On the day before *Sukkot*, non-Jewish farmers bring into town bundles of newly-cut green branches of needle trees (fir and pine), which they carry on donkeys, to sell to the Jews as *s'chach* (covering for the *Sukkah*). The Caucasian Jews build simple, small *Sukkot*, out of four poles which they stick into the ground, with the walls also made of branches.

Some make their *Sukkot* in their yards, others --on the roof. The *Sukkah* is small, just about large enough for two or three men, the male members of the family to get in and have their meals there. They do not decorate the *Sukkah*. Their Rabbi spends the whole week in the *Sukkah*, also sleeping in it, unless heavy rain compels him to go back to the house to sleep.

The Jews are too poor to be able to afford a *lulav* and *etrog* for each family. So they have a "communal" *lulav* for each synagogue. It is usually brought in from near-by Persia. The *etrog* is brought into the synagogue with great respect and love. It is placed on a shiny brass tray, and every one in turn takes the *lulav* and *etrog* and kisses it lovingly, then makes the blessing, waves it, kisses it again and puts it down for the next fellow-Jew to do the same. Before long the *etrog* can hardly be recognized from so much handling and kissing.

On the night of *Shemini Atzeret* they make a great feast, and spend most of the night rejoicing, until the time arrives to hold the morning service. The women, too, make their own parties and celebrate the happy festival in their own way.

### **In Dagestan**

The Jews of Daghestan are known as the "Mountain Jews." They live in the mountains of the Republic of Daghestan, which belongs to the same Caucasian

region. Like their other Caucasian Jewish brethren, they have lived here from most ancient times, and they, too, believe they are descendants of the Ten Tribes. They speak a Jewish dialect of Persian.

They are tall, strong and picturesque, and engage in farming, cattle raising and tanning (leather-making). In olden times they lived in separate villages of their own. Now they mix more with the non-Jewish population, but they cling to their Jewish faith and are proud to be Jews.

The Jews of Daghestan love to make beautiful *Sukkot*, which they decorate with fine handsome rugs and carpets, at which they are experts. The *etrogim* and *lulavim* are brought in from Persia, or the southern part of, Russia. After prayer they greet each other joyfully and invite each other to their *Sukkot* for refreshments.

Thus each day of *Sukkot* is a happy day, and a good time is had by all.

On the night of *Hoshana Rabba* they get together in the synagogue, light candles, and the learned among them read for them the Book of Deuteronomy, and they recite the whole Book of Psalms. At dawn they hold their morning service, recite Hoshanas and go with *hakafot* seven times, much in the same way as we do.

On the night of *Shemini Atzeret* they also have *hakafot* (as in most Russian communities). The women watch from the gallery, their faces hidden behind veils and kerchiefs, while the boys congregate in the center of the synagogue and kiss the scrolls of the Torah. All the men and boys dance with the Torah joyfully, and recite prayers and hymns in strange melodies and tunes.

### **Among The Kurdish Jews**

The Kurdistan country and mountains belong partly to Persia and Iraq and partly to Turkey. Here, too, Jews have lived from very ancient times, and they believe that their ancestors belonged to the exiled Ten Tribes. They number about 15,000 and engage in farming and cattle raising. Some Kurdish Jews have emigrated to the Holy Land, where they have communities of their own, and have preserved their customs, language and dress.

The Kurdish Jews are tall and muscular. They look very much like the Muslims, for they dress in the same manner. They wear heavy turbans on their heads, broad pants, with a wide belt, or girdle around their shirts, which have long sleeves and are worn over their pants. The women, too, wear roomy blouses with heavy belts, and balloon trousers. Their heads are covered with turbans, with thick black braids falling

over their shoulders. The Kurdish Jews, both men and women, look very impressive in their festive dress, especially on the Sabbaths and festivals.

They pray in simple synagogues, sitting on rugs. Before entering the synagogue they take off their footwear. In the *Sukkah*, too, they sit on rugs, as at home.

Among them, as among the Caucasian Jews, there are two types: the Jews who live in the valleys, and the Jews who live in the mountains. The "Mountain Jews" are darker in skin, and have black hair. They grow beards that they never cut or trim, so that many of them look fierce in their garb with their daggers at their sides.

Their customs are similar to those of the Babylonian and Baghdad Jews. On the Sabbath and festivals, especially during *Sukkot*, they make merry and rejoice very heartily.

### **In Aden**

Aden is a sea-port on the Red Sea, belonging to Great Britain. The Jews here must have been among the earliest settlers. Some five hundred years ago, the great Rabbi Obadiah of Bartinuro) wrote that there had come to Jerusalem "Jews from the land of Eden . . . The Jews there are dark brown. They are not much acquainted with the Talmud, but only with Rabbi Alfasi) and Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon')

Before the last World War there were seven synagogues in Aden, and the Jewish population numbered several thousand. The native Jews are chiefly reed-workers, mat-weavers, masons, jewelers, bookbinders and porters. They eat mostly vegetables, dates, and fish, and drink wine. The women wear a veil (like Mohammedan women), shirt, trousers and a wig (*sheitel*). The men wear shirt, kilt, prayer fringes, waistcoat and a long loose upper garment with a girdle around the waist.

When *Sukkot* comes, the Jewish quarter of Aden appears like one green garden. For on the crowded rooftops there are many *Sukkot*, covered with green *s'chach*. The Jews of Aden sleep in their *Sukkot*, for in any case many Jews sleep on the roof because it is cooler there. Many *Sukkot* are beautifully decorated. Multi-colored cloths are hung on the walls, and from the *Sukkah* roof hang apples, pomegranates and *etrogim*, filling the air with a pleasant fragrance.

The Jews of Aden love to sit in their *Sukkot*. The meals last a long time, and are accompanied by songs and melodies, some in Hebrew, some in Arabic, and at night,

all the *Sukkot* are ablaze with light and color, shining through beautiful glass lamps, imported from India.

## Shemini Atzeres & Simchas Torah Stories

### Give And Gain

[http://www.chabad.org/kids/article\\_cdo/aid/5356/jewish/Give-And-Gain.htm](http://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/5356/jewish/Give-And-Gain.htm)

The Torah commands the Jewish farmer to give away one tenth of his produce to the Levites and needy. This tenth part is called *maasser* (tithe). On *Shemini Atzeret* we read a famous portion in the Torah, beginning with the words *asser t'asser*, meaning, You shall surely give tithe.

The reason this portion is read on *Shemini Atzeret*, Will be discovered, if we remember that *Sukkot* is the Festival of Ingathering and *Shemini Atzeret* is the eighth day of *Sukkot*(although it is really a separate festival). In other words, this is the time when all the produce of the land has been gathered in. It was, therefore, the time of giving away what was due to the Priests and Levites and other landless and needy people.

Our Sages see in the words *asser l'asser* an indication of a promise of riches to him who faithfully observes the law of *maasser*. For the Hebrew words *asser* (to give a tenth part) and *osher* (riches) are derived from the same root. And so their saying became famous: *Asser, bishvil shetisasher*, meaning, Give away a tenth that you

may become rich. The Talmud contains many stories of how people who observed the law of *maaser* were amply rewarded. 'We will tell you one story here:

Once upon a time there lived in ancient Israel a farmer whose land produced a thousand bushels of wheat, year after year. Being a pious Jew who observed the *mitzvot* of the Torah, his first act after harvesting was to set apart a full tenth of the produce as a *maaser*. In his case, it was one hundred bushels of wheat, which was quite a substantial fortune. But the farmer cheerfully gave it away to the servants of G-d. in the Beit Hamikdosh and to the needy. The remaining nine hundred bushels were more than enough to take care of all his needs, with a tidy sum of money in savings. The man was getting more prosperous every year.

The time came to leave this earthly world, and the pious and wise farmer called his only son to his bedside:

"My dear son," said the dying man: "G-d is calling me, and I am happy to go, for I lived a good life, in accordance with the commandments of our holy Torah. Whatever I possess will now be yours, to do as you please. One thing I want to advise you. Our land produces one thousand bushels a year; never fail to give *maaser*, and it will not disappoint you."

The old man was gone, and his son now became the owner of the farm. When harvest time came, the land produced one thousand bushels of wheat, as ever before. The son set apart one hundred bushels for *maaser*, as his father had done.

Twelve moons passed, and once again it was time to give *maaser*. Now, the possession of wealth had had a bad influence on the young man. He thought that it was a shame to give away such a fortune, and he decided to give only ninety bushels, instead of the full one hundred.

The following year, however, the land produced not one thousand bushels but nine hundred.

Seeing his income decreased, the young farmer decided to make up some of the loss by reducing his *maaser*. Instead of giving away ninety bushels, he gave away only eighty.

He waited for the next year's harvest quite impatiently. To his consternation, the land produced only eight hundred bushels! Do you think the young man realized that he was playing a dangerous game? Indeed, no... He became stubborn, and kept on

reducing the quantity of his *maaser*. At last a point was reached when his land produced only one hundred bushels, just as much as the *maaser* which was given away in the good old days when his father lived.

The foolish young man was filled with anger and sorrow. He invited his friends and relatives to his house, to comfort him in his misfortune. At the appointed time, the invited guests appeared. But instead of giving him a sympathetic look and trying to comfort him, they looked as though they had come to celebrate.

The young man nearly lost his temper.

"Have you come to insult me, and mock me in my misfortune?" he cried with grief.

"Far be it from us," replied the guests cheerfully. "We have come to celebrate with you the transfer of your land from your hands into the hands of G-d. You see, until now you had been the owner of the fields, and you had given a tenth part of its produce to G-d's charges. Now, however, G-d owns the land, and you are His

charge, receiving a tenth part of what the land can produce. You have thus joined the ranks of the Levites, and we have come to congratulate you... "

The young man well understood the lesson which his friends taught him. He decided to change his evil ways. How right were the Sages when they said, *asser, bishvil shetishasher*.

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## **Hakafot Under Fire**

[http://www.chabad.org/kids/article\\_cdo/aid/5357/jewish/Hakafot-Under-Fire.htm](http://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/5357/jewish/Hakafot-Under-Fire.htm)

The *hakafot* were in full swing. Round and round went the circle of dancing worshippers in the little *shul*, chanting a snappy *Simchat Torah* melody and dancing rhythmically to its tune. Circles formed and reformed as some dancers dropped out exhausted and others took their place, the dancers holding each other by the hand or shoulders. Now and again someone would strike up a new tune, and the pace would quicken with the rhythm of the new melody. Those who dropped out of the

dancing circle would continue to participate by swaying to and fro, clapping their hands and urging the dancers on to renewed vigor.

I had come to watch, that's all. But I had come too close to the dancing circle. Somebody from the circle grabbed me by the arm and pulled me into the whirling mass of dancers. Somewhat bewildered at first, I soon caught up with the rhythm and excitement of the dancers. I now felt part of these lovely people who were dancing and rejoicing with G-d's greatest gift-the Torah. It was a wonderful feeling.

As the circle grew I found myself pushed more and more into the center, I turned my head to steal a glance at the man who had "roped me in." He was still resting his hand lightly on my shoulder. He seemed an elderly man, and I wondered where he got so much strength to dance and dance without end.

As his eyes were closed, I did not mind studying his face a little longer without seeming rude or curious. His lips were moving, but not a sound came from them. Beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead and face, and I was astonished to see that tears were streaming down his cheeks. An inner happiness and ecstasy were written all over his noble face. I felt drawn to him, and though I was almost exhausted, I should have been ashamed to admit it, seeing the lively energy of this elderly man.

Finally, the *hakafot* were over, and the circle broke up. The dancers sat down to relax and catch their breath. I followed my dancing neighbor and sat down near him.

"It's a long time since I had such inspiring *hakafot*," he said, wiping the perspiration from his face.

"Yes, it makes you feel good," I said, trying to keep up the conversation. I felt that if the gentleman would only continue to speak, it would be worth listening to.

"Good!" exclaimed my neighbor. "Young man, do you know what 'good' is? Have you ever felt so gratefully happy that you wept for joy?"

"Well . . ."

"Ah! Let me tell you of those *hakafot* many years ago, and you will know what I mean..."

I was never more interested in my life. My neighbor must have read my eagerness, and he did not keep me in suspense.

"It was about thirty years ago. Let me see, yes, exactly thirty years ago today, or rather tonight. Those were the terrible days after the First World War. I lived in Riga then, the capital of the newly born independent Republic of Latvia.

"That night of the *hakafot* we were sheltering in a cellar in the old city. The thud of cannon bombardment could be heard in the near distance, and the rattle of machine guns. For the German insurgents under Bermont were just across the river Dvina, and the city was resolutely defended by the nationalist forces. Things were not going well for the nationalists. They were losing ground, they were nervous, and they suspected treachery and espionage. Anybody that fell under suspicion was put to the wall and shot, without even any investigation made.

"Now imagine that night, with a heavy bombardment by the enemy across the river, the sky overcast, and the whole city in a total blackout. Suddenly, sentries see a light through a window in a top floor apartment. The light dances up and down, then disappears. 'The spy nest has been discovered at last! the sentries decide, and they rush to the house to lay their hands on the spy. They run up the steps, and down again. We can hear their heavy boots. Finally they burst into our cellar and cry, 'Where is the dirty spy?!

As I raised my eyebrows, as if to say, I don't get it, the old man smiled.

"You are wondering what those sentries were doing in our cellar at *hakafot*? Well, then I must tell you about Zalman. His second name was Michelson, but hardly anyone knew it. He was better known as Zalman the Mattress-maker. He was as poor as a church mouse, but as cheerful and carefree as a lark. It goes without saying that he was a pious man. He did not know what it meant to be sad at any time, let alone at times when rejoicing was in order. Heaven knows, he had plenty to be worried about: many mouths to feed, a marriageable daughter, an ailing wife. But G-d had blessed him with a cheerful disposition, and seemingly nothing, absolutely nothing could break his spirit.

"Well, Zalman the Mattress-maker was with us in the cellar that night. That night of all nights, when Jews are expected to rejoice with the Torah, to dance with the Torah, there we were sitting downcast, depressed, shivering in our skins every time an explosion shattered the silence.

"Zalman could not stand it any longer. 'Brothers!' he exclaimed. 'It's *simchat* Torah to-night! We must rejoice! But his words fell flat upon our ears. He looked hurt for a moment, then he suddenly remembered something. 'I see, my friends, that without a drop of *shnapps* there will be nothing doing. Well, I just remembered: I have a pint of *shnapps* in the cupboard at home, which I have been saving for tonight. Clean forgot! I'll be back in a jiffy.'

"We looked at him in amazement. 'Are you crazy, Zalman? You cannot climb all those steps to the sixth floor, with shrapnel flying about, and bullets, and broken glass and masonry-for a pint of *shnapps*! Don't be a fool, Zalman.'

"But Zalman said: 'Don't worry, brethren. We have a great and mighty G-d. I'll be right back, and then we will celebrate *hakafot*.' And before we could hold him back forcibly, he had disappeared, taking with him a candle...

"Zalman climbed to the sixth floor, where he lived. He lit the candle and found the bottle. He was so happy, that he danced about with the candle burning in one hand, and the bottle in the other, forgetting all about the war, the bombardment, the regulations. It was in this state that he finally came back to us in the cellar.

"Now, my young friend, you understand what the sentries saw in the darkness of the night....

"It was just as we prepared to celebrate *hakafot*, that the sentries burst in crying, 'Where is the dirty spy?!'

"We were horror-struck, and remained speechless. 'We knew what it meant to be accused of spying. 'Turn the spy over to us, or we will have you all shot!' the sentries shouted. 'Somebody was giving signals to the enemy a few moments ago, and the arsenal is but a block away! You dirty Jews would have us all blown up, would you? For the last time, who was giving the signals to the enemy?'

"At this moment Zalman stepped forward, bottle in hand, and calmly said: 'Officers, it was I whom you saw with a light upstairs, but I was not signaling to the enemy. I..."

"Never mind, come along!' the soldiers said briskly, and marched poor Zalman off under heavy guard.

"If we had been depressed before, now we were truly grief-stricken. Poor Zalman! He would be put to the wall and shot immediately. No questions asked. Every time

we heard a burst of machine gun or rifle fire, we thought, there goes poor Zalman. Many of us cried. 'We immediately pledged ourselves to support poor Zalman's widow and orphans, and to place a stone on his grave, if his body were delivered to us by the authorities.

"Time dragged on slowly. We thought the night would never end. All the time we were talking about the late Zalman and his poor bereaved family. Everybody had a good word about Zalman, how he cheered everybody up at all times, how he was the life of every *simchah*, every wedding and happy occasion, whether he was invited or not, he was always welcome....

"Suddenly we heard steps, and presently in walked --who do you think?-- Zalman! We couldn't believe our eyes. We thought it was a ghost. But no, the bottle in his hand looked real enough. Zalman was deathly pale, but happy and smiling, as always... We rushed at him and nearly floored him. Everybody tried to kiss him and embrace him. There were tears in all eyes. Some of us mumbled, Blessed be He who revives the dead...

" 'Stop it! Stop!' cried Zalman. 'I love you, too, but there is no time for that now. Let's celebrate *hakafo!*' But we would not start with *hakafo!* until he told us what happened to him, and by what strange miracle he had escaped certain death.

"'Didn't I tell you, we have a great and mighty G-d?' Zalman began. 'Well, when I was brought to headquarters and placed before the officer on duty, he hardly looked up at me. 'To be shot' he called out. 'No time to investigate.'

"'I looked at the officer for a moment, a thought flashed in my mind, and I called out: 'Styopka! What on earth are you saying?!

"The officer looked up sharply, gazed at me for a moment, then burst out laughing. 'What a joke! You, Zalman, a spy! Ha, ha, ha! And with that bottle in your hand ... Ha, ha, ha! Well, well, sit down, let's talk about old times. Do you remember when I used to come to your house to remove the candlesticks on Saturday mornings, and light a fire in the winter? I used to get a nice slice of white bread, let me see, *challah* you called it. I was a kid then, but you treated me as though I was a grown up. I loved you, Zalman. Those were happy days in our little town, quiet and peaceful. But these are grim days... You are lucky that I was on duty tonight. It was not even my turn, but I was substituting for a friend. You would have been a dead duck by now. But, say, what's the idea of the bottle? Is it Purim tonight?'

"You ought to know better, Stephan Ivanovitsch,' says I to him. 'Purim is at the end of winter, and it's the fall now. No, it's *Simchat Torah* tonight.'

"Sure, I remember. You go round and round in a circle dancing..."

"That's what we were going to do tonight, when we were 'slightly' interrupted..."

"Well, go back to your dancing, and say a prayer for us, Zalman. You Jews are marvellous, risking your neck for your religion, dancing in the shadow of death....'

"That was Zalman's simple story. He got a special pass to come back to us at once, and to use at all times of curfew in the future. And then we began *hakafot*.

"...Oh, those *hakafot*! I'll never forget them. Every time I celebrate *hakafot*, I remember them; for the last thirty years!"

Then he began to hum a melody: "Swing your feet and raise your voice, with our Torah, do rejoice!"

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## **Simchat Torah Of A Cantonist**

[http://www.chabad.org/kids/article\\_cdo/aid/5358/jewish/Simchat-Torah-Of-A-Cantonist.htm](http://www.chabad.org/kids/article_cdo/aid/5358/jewish/Simchat-Torah-Of-A-Cantonist.htm)

Simchat Torah in the "Soldiers' Synagogue" of the town S. in old Russia was a wonderful sight. There was true and genuine rejoicing with the Torah in that little synagogue, where most of the members were one-time cantonists.

The most impressive sight was when at the height of the rejoicing, one of the old soldiers, while dancing with a Scroll of the Torah in his arms, would puff his shirt open, disclosing deep scars on his chest and shoulders, and would sing, "Torah, Torah, I love thee." After the *hakafot* we, the youngsters in the little synagogue, would surround him and beg him to tell us all about those scars. Spellbound we

listened to his tale though we had heard it so many times before. This is what he related:

"I was a little boy of eight when the terrible order came to my father, Rabbi Shlomo, his memory be blessed, to hand over twenty boys from our town for the Czar's army. There was a great outcry in our small town. To all those parents who had any boys of my age, my parents included, it meant a day of judgment. If all the children in town would have died of a plague on one day, the tragedy would not have been as great as it was now.

"In my father's house were gathered all the leading members of our community. Some of the wealthier members offered large sums to the community chest if their sons were spared. But my father would have none of it. He demanded that all children be treated alike, and that the recruiting should be done by casting lots.

"Young though I was, I realized how terrible the tragedy was, and lying in my bedroom pretending to be asleep, I heard many a raised and excited voice in the adjoining room, where the meeting was taking place.

"And what about your Dovidel?' I shivered when I heard my name mentioned.

"Of course he will be no exception,' I heard my father's grave reply. The meeting continued almost all night, but I had fallen asleep before it ended.

"When I awoke in the morning I found my mother sitting at my bedside, her eyes red from weeping and from lack of sleep. She embraced me as soon as I opened my eyes, and I felt two hot tears burning on my cheek. No words were necessary. I knew I was to be one of those boys who would be sent away from home, perhaps never to see my parents again.

"Don't cry mother,' I said, 'I will come back.'

"What I am worried about, Dovidel,' my mother said, 'is whether you will come back a Jew.'

"Mother, I will always be a Jew,' I said resolutely.

"The scene was repeated again as I sat on my father's knee in his little study. He spoke to me for a long time. There were no tears in his eyes, but I knew his heart was breaking.

"Father did not live long after. About a week before the boys had to be delivered, he died.

"A few days later, two strangers came to town. They said they came to buy cattle from the surrounding farmers. Rumors spread that they were kidnappers. People whispered that they had been bribed by the wealthy families to leave their children alone and to fulfill the quota by kidnapping the boys of the poor families. My father's plan was not heeded.

"The day the kidnappers came, our town seemed to have lost all its boys. Mother hid me in the cellar. Then the kidnappers came to our house. I heard rude voices, a faint tussle, then a gasp and a thud, as if a lifeless body had fallen to the floor. I could not stay in my hiding place, I climbed up the steps leading to the trap-door and cried, 'Mother, are you alright? Let me out!'

"The next moment firm hands grabbed me and I was taken away. I saw my mother lying on the floor. I fought desperately, but it was to no avail. I could only cry, 'You brutes, you killed my mother.'

"Your mother will be alright,' they said. 'Now you be a good boy or you will be sorry.'

"We boys were led away in two wagons. We were roped together, with the end of the rope tied to the wagon. The whole town turned out to see us off, and my mother was there too. I will never forget that parting. An armed guard surrounded our wagons and held the people at bay. But suddenly my mother tore forward and managed to throw me a little package. 'Don't forget your Bar Mitzvah,' were her parting words. It was a pair of *tefillin* and a little prayer book, but my Bar Mitzvah was so far off....

"Well, I will not tell you what I went through in the next three years of my 'training.' It was not a military training, but a systematic preparation for conversion, with endless beatings and tortures whenever we refused to go with our heads uncovered, or to kiss the cross; and we always refused.

"During these years I came to be regarded as the 'chief' of our group. Being the son of a rabbi and having learned a great deal more than the others, they all looked up to me for guidance and encouragement. I knew that if I should show the slightest weakness, the spirit of the boys would be broken by the cruel and horrible 'training' we were getting.

"Somehow, the sergeant who was in charge of our group got wind of it. From that time on he concentrated all the 'heavy artillery' on little me. I was to be the example for the other boys by renouncing my faith.

"Well they did not have an easy time of it, and the deep scars that you can see will tell you that I had no easy time of it either.

"One day, after a terrific beating, I was brought before the sergeant. A priest was present and he tried to appear very friendly and concerned. A long talk followed and whenever one of them stopped to catch his breath, the other one took over. I was told of a bright future, of a brilliant career in the military academy, of the dashing uniform of a general, and the honor and power of a governor; but if I refused, I would die miserably, never seeing my mother again.

"On and on they talked, but I was hardly able to follow all they said. I was only aware of an acute pain all over my body, and an agonizing thirst. I asked for a drink of water.

"The sergeant filled a glass of sparkling water, and as I reached for it he held it back.

"Not so fast, my boy, you must first give us an answer.'

"Please give me the water, I will give you an answer in three days,' I said desperately.

"The sergeant and the priest exchanged glances, and then I was allowed to drink the water.

"The next three days were the worst that I had ever had. I lay on my bunk with all my body aching, but worse still was my mental agony. Could I hold out much longer? Should I give in? And then, I thought of my charges, the other boys of my group, and of my parents, and I shook my head and cried, No, no, no!' And so it was, yes and no, all the time.

"Finally, came the last night before the fateful day. I was visited by the sergeant. 'You are looking fine, my boy. Won't it be a great day tomorrow?'

"It sure will,' I replied. He went away greatly elated, feeling quite certain that the morrow would be a day of triumph for him, a day of promotion, when the general

would pat him on his back and say, 'Well done, Ivan,' and the priest would bless him with eternal life for having 'saved a soul.'

"That night I had a strange dream. I was back in my little town at the bank of our stream, where I dived in for a swim. Suddenly, I felt a terrible cramp and I was unable to swim any longer. I became frightened and gasped for breath. I wanted to shout for help but could make no sound. I was drowning... Then I saw a straw floating nearby, and in desperation I grabbed for it. Suddenly the straw turned into a mighty golden chain, the farther end of which was firmly and securely fastened to a tree growing on the river's brink. As I caught the end of the chain nearest to me, I saw that it consisted of many links growing bigger and bigger the further removed they were from me. Then I saw golden words engraved in the links and when I looked closer I could read, 'Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,' on the biggest and remotest three links, followed by many other names so familiar to me from the Bible. When I looked at my own link I saw my own name engraved on it, and it was securely held by my father's link.

"For a moment I felt secure and happy, but then to my great horror I saw that my link was slowly breaking apart. One more minute and it would completely break away from the chain, and I would be drowned....

"No, no! I cried. 'Don't break!' I woke up with a start and my little heart was pounding away. I lay crying the rest of the night.

"The big mess-hall was filled to capacity. At the dais sat many military men and among them my own sergeant and the priest. In the hall sat many young Jewish recruits from my own group, as well as from other nearby units. An elaborate affair was planned for my 'conversion.'

"When I was led up to the dais and was ceremoniously asked to declare my willingness to become a Christian, I did not answer immediately. I turned around, deliberately gazing at my fellow-Jewish recruits, at the walls adorned with various swords and sabers, and through the window into the blue sky.

"They became impatient at the head table and prompted me again to tell them of my willingness to embrace their faith.

"Then I walked up to the wall and took down a small hatchet. Returning to the table I placed three fingers on it, carefully avoiding the middle one around which I hoped to

wind the straps of *tefillin* one day, and before anyone realized what I was about to do, I lifted the hatchet and brought it down with all my strength upon my fingers.

"There is your answer for the three days!' I said, waving my bloody hand in their faces. The next moment I fainted..."

Here the old cantonist paused and looked with pride at his left hand where the tips of three fingers were missing. He told us no more, but we knew that it was this very aged soldier who brought about the repeal of the Czar's cruel decree. For the story of the young boy's heroism and devotion to his faith was the talk of the whole imperial court. When Czar Nicholas heard of it, he knew that so long as there were boys like this David among his Jewish subjects, all his decrees were doomed to failure.

We looked admiringly upon the aged cantonist, but hero worship was something he could not stand. He jumped up from his place and went dancing and singing:

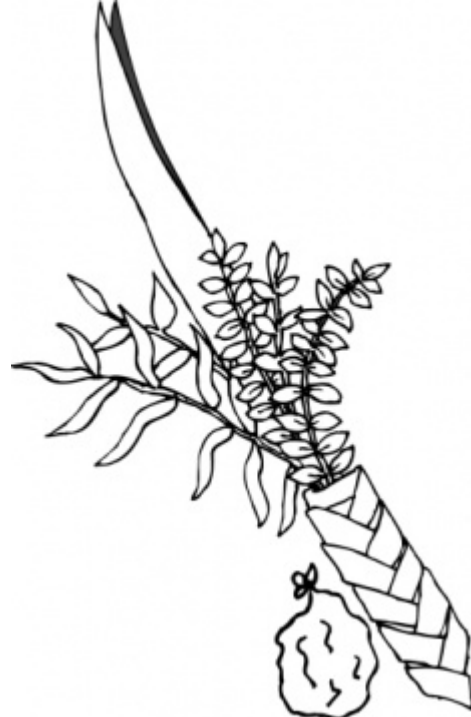
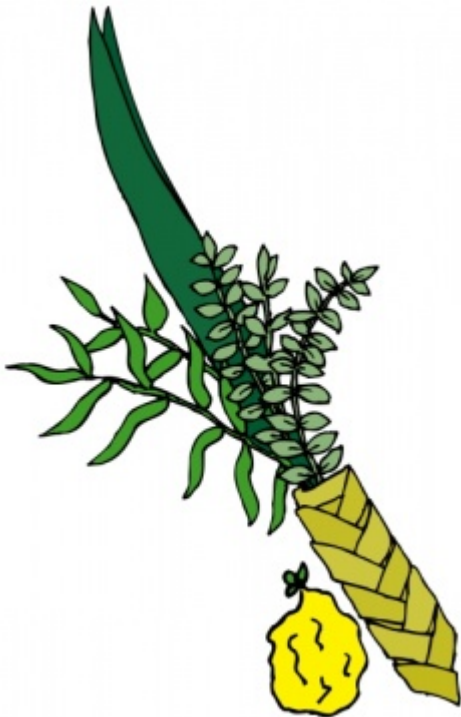
"The Torah is our only choice,

On Simchat Torah rejoice! Rejoice!"



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