

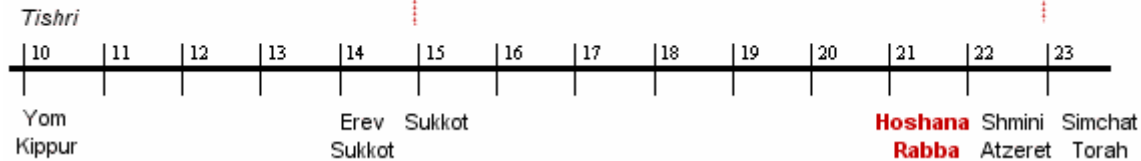


Hoshana Rabbah -

The Great Salvation

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Season of our Joy



Hoshana Rabbah

The seventh (and last) day of Sukkot is called *Hoshana Rabbah*, (הושנא רבא) or the “Great Salvation,” a climactic day of praise to the LORD that was also viewed by the rabbis as a mini-Yom Kippur, the day on which the heavenly decrees made on Rosh Hashanah and sealed on Yom Kippur are actually sent out to be fulfilled:



Rosh Hashanah	Yom Kippur	Hoshana Rabbah
Judgment is rendered	Judgment is sealed	Judgment is delivered

Hoshana Rabbah is both a somber day of reflection as well as a day of joy and celebration.

According to the Mishnah (Sukkah 4:5), during the time of the Temple willow branches were placed around the altar and a circuit was made around the altar while the people recited: "Hoshiah na" (הושיע נא) - "Save us, please!" (Psalm 118: 25).

Preparations for Hoshana Rabbah

- **Greeting your friends**
Since Hoshana Rabbah marks the time when the LORD decrees the Book of Life (and Death), a custom is to greet your friends with the phrase, “*piska tava*”, meaning (in Aramaic) “a good note” (referring to the final inscription and sealing in the book of Life).
- **Staying up all night**
It is a common practice is to stay awake all night on the night before Hoshana Rabbah. During this time the book of Deuteronomy and the entire book of Psalms is read (this is to ensure that the Torah has been read through before the beginning of Simchat Torah). It is also customary to prepare the willow branches for the next morning’s Hoshana service.



The Hoshana Rabbah Service

During the Hoshana Rabbah service, many choose to wear the white kittel (the robe worn on Yom Kippur) during the morning prayers. In almost every congregation the leader will wear the kittel since the day is a Day of Judgment. In the synagogue itself, the *parokhet* (curtain on the ark) remains white and extra candles (that remain from Yom Kippur) may be lit.

- **Seven Times Around the Sanctuary**

During the six previous days of Sukkot the lulav is shaken during the *Hallel* (praise psalms sung right after the Amidah in the morning service) as well as during the *Hoshana* - a hymn that begins with *Hosha' na* [save us, please!] that is sung during the service. The Torah is taken from the Ark and set on the *bimah* [torah reading table] and the congregation circles it (once) in a processional (called *hakkafah*) while shaking their *lulavot* and carrying their *etrogim*.

On Hoshana Rabbah, however, instead of one Hoshana, seven *Hoshanot* are recited and seven *hakkafot* are made around the sanctuary. Normally all the Torah scrolls are taken from the Ark and put on the bema while this sevenfold processional takes place.



- **The Beating of the Willows**

At the conclusion of this of the Hakkafot, an additional ritual is conducted in which the branches of the willow (*aravot*) are struck upon the ground (or upon a chair) five times until their leaves fall off. This ceremony recalls the days of the Temple when branches were struck against the ground near the altar as a symbolic gesture of casting away of one's sins. In like manner, the "beating of the willows" ceremony symbolizes the ridding of any remaining sins (the leaves representing these transgressions) that might yet influence God's decision to "seal" the Book of Life with our names inscribed therein. Many Jews will keep the beaten willow branches to use when they burn the chametz (yeast) just before Passover.

- **Torah Readings**

There are four aliyot (separate individuals called to read from the Torah) on Hoshana Rabbah:

Portion:	Numbers 29:26-34
Reader 1	29:26-28
Reader 2	29:29-31
Reader 3	29:32-34
Reader 4	29:29-34



The Closure of Sukkot

For many Jews, Hoshana Rabbah is the last day one shakes the lulav and etrog and eats within the sukkah. Round challot are often served, as well as apples and honey (just like the evening meal of Rosh Hashanah). There is a widespread custom to eat Kreplach (Jewish ravioli, dough filled with meat) on this day.

The afternoon of Hoshana Rabbah is the winding down of Sukkot. Some people visit the Sukkah one last time to eat a snack and recite the following prayer: “May it be that we merit to dwell in the sukkah made of Leviathan,” an idea that derives from the Talmud where it is said that the LORD will slay the Leviathan in the end of days and make sukkot out of its hide for the righteous.

On the evening following Hoshana Rabbah begins the festival of Shmini Atzeret.