

Hilchos Spookos

A Practical Guide to Observing Spookot/Jewish Halloween

Overview

In the Diaspora, Jews traditionally leave up their Sukkot until the day after the holiday of Halloween, in honor of the celebration of *Spookot*, or Jewish Halloween. This is a celebration of our spookiest witchy foremothers, our most syncretic diasporic observances and the ancient sacrifices that took place on this day in the temple of Spooky Shechina. It is meant to be a fearsomely fun occasion, and each Jew, each home and each community is encouraged to add to the observance of this holiday in each generation.

Below you will find the practices passed down from our Sages until now. Please view them not as the end of the story, but as the beginning of your own.

Names of the Holiday

1. Spookot
 - a. Ashkenazish: Spookos/Spikkes
 - b. Sephardic: Spuccot/Sephuccoth
2. Hallelween
3. Goyische Purim
4. Jewish Halloween
5. Succaween
 - a. Originally from Belarus
 - b. participants are called "Succawieners"

Schach

Schaaaaaaaaach!!!

It is customary to take down your schach after Simchat torah, and to replace it with fake spider webbing (ie. Schaaaaaaaaaaaaach!!!!!! - traditionally said as if screamed in terror). The webbing should touch all four corners of your sukkah and be full enough to be spooky but thin enough to see 3 stars.

- *Environmentally conscious Succawieners can also use cheesecloth, or just allow spiderwebs to accumulate naturally*

Hanging paper-cut-out spiders from the Schaaaaaaaaach!!! is encouraged, but not required.

The bracha for when you put up the schach is:

**Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam, asher kidishanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu
la'sim et-ha'schaaaaaaaach!**

(The traditional reply is: **OOOMEN!**)

Lulav/Etrog

Boo-lav/Pump-trog

In lieu of a lulav and etrog, it is customary to shake a *boo-lav* and *pump-trog* on the morning of the chag.

Boo-lav:

The *boo-lav* can be any natural plant material that looks spooky. Dead and gnarled small palm fronds and spooky sticks are traditionally used. In some communities, people also use a witches broom

- In some Moldovan shetls it is also referred to as a *ghoulov*

Pump-trog:

The pump-trog, or *etroll*, is any small pumpkin with an intact stem/pitom. The more bulbousy and disfigured, the greater the kiddush-hashem.

Shake the *boo-lav* and *pump-trog* in all four directions - north for the fearsome Yeti, east for the terrifying Dybbuk, west for the mysterious Big Foot/Sasquatch, and south for the venerated Chupacabra; as well as up for where the crow/raven flies, and down for the underworld, to which we all return.

Before shaking, recite the shechiyanu, and then this bracha

**Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam, asher kidishanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu al
nityilat boo-lav
OOOMEN!**

Ushpizin

Boo-shpizin

In many communities, photos of loved ones, movement elders and freedom fighters are placed around the Sukkah to bring them in as honored guests to our space. After Simchat Torah, we traditionally remove these and lovingly store them away, and replace them with pictures of *boo-shpizin*. These should be frightening images with either a Jewish connection or a special meaning to you.

Traditionally, we include images of the golem and Haman, alongside dybbuks and witches.

Before putting up the pictures of the boo-shpizin, this bracha is traditionally recited:

***Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam, asher kidishanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu
l'kabel et-ha'Boo-shpizin
OOOMEN!***

Traditional Greetings

1. Chag ha'Spookot SameAHHHHHHch!
2. Happy Hallelween
3. May You Be Written in the Spook of Life
4. Gut Spookus

Pronunciation of Blessings

In many Ashkenazi communities, who traditionally pronounce "oh"s as "oy"s, the "oy"s are changed to "oo"s instead, in honor of the spookiness of *Spookot*. An example is below:

Bar**oo**ch atah ad**oonoo** el**oo**heinu melech ha'**ool**am asher kidishan**oo** b'mitzv**oot**av v'tzivan**oo**
al nitilat **boo**-lav.

In many Sephardi/Mizrahi communities, who traditionally pronounce 'ayin's gutterally, the gutterall 'ayin is expanded and accented into a more bone-rattling and blood-curdling release of one's inner-demon.

The raspier and more-other-worldly, the more kiddush-hashem. Gollum from Lord of the Rings is a good benchmark.

In addition, many in both communities extend any "ah" sounds in their brachot to be scream-like, as in the "SameAAHHHHch", in the common chag greeting. Each soul-piercing Ahh! said in a bracha is thought to bring *tikkun 'olam* and hasten the swift coming of *moshiAHHHHHHHch*.

Other Minhagim

Many other observances are kept in other Jewish communities around the world. These include:

1. Decorating our homes with the 8 legged spider
 - a. Representing the 8th day of Shmini Atzeret + HaShem's desire for extended celebration

2. Hanging multicolored ornamental Flint corn during Sukkot and leaving it there results in nice corncob skeletons as the squirrels and rats feast on the corn over intervening weeks.
3. Lulav/etrog couples-costume contest
4. Jewish pumpkin carving
 - a. Often called "*Brit mil-MWUHAHAHHAHAHAH*"
5. Roasting marshmaaaahls in remembrance the strange fire of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu.

Additions

This, like all halacha, is living halacha. Please contact bkoatz@gmail.com if you'd like to be a collaborator, or leave a comment if you'd like to be the Rashi to these halachot.

Chag ha'Spookot SameAHHHHHHch!