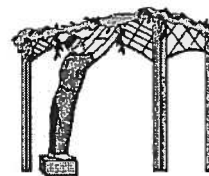


Dear Families,

Sukkot is the fall harvest festival of the Jewish calendar and is celebrated just before the earth goes into dormancy for the winter. Like many of our Jewish holidays, *Sukkot* has two foundations: an historical one and an agricultural one.



- Historically, a *sukkah* (meaning temporary booth; plural is *sukkot*) reminds us of the temporary dwelling lived in by the Israelites during the 40 years spent wandering in the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan (now known as Israel) after the Exodus.
- Agriculturally, *Sukkot* is the last of the three pilgrimage festivals¹ when ancient Jews would pack the best of their seasonal crops and journey to The Temple in Jerusalem. Once there, the Jews offered sacrifices and celebrated as a community, thanking God for the bounty of that year's harvest.

The best-known traditions of *Sukkot* are building, decorating, and eating in the *sukkah*. (Some people even sleep in the *sukkah*!) It is also during this time of year that people host “*sukkah* parties.” They invite friends and family to not only help decorate the *sukkah*, but also to eat and to rejoice in the small, temporary hut.

From the tradition of inviting others to the *sukkah*, we are reminded of the crucial Jewish value of *Hahnasat Orhim*. *Hahnasat Orhim*, the act of welcoming a visitor, is a Jewish virtue traced all the way back to Abraham in the Bible. He and Sarah were known for their “open-tent” policy, welcoming strangers into their home for food and rest. (See Genesis 18:1-5.)

THINGS YOU CAN DO AS A FAMILY



Build a *sukkah* at home, or take your child to visit someone else's *sukkah*.

If someone invites you, go! And if you build a sukkah, be sure to invite others to enjoy a meal or dessert under its beautiful “roof.” The JCC and most synagogues build their own sukkah and usually have an “open door” policy for its use.

Activities you can do in a *sukkah* with your child(ren) include:

- Eat a snack or meal there.
- Recite the special blessing that Jews say to thank God for the privilege of enjoying time in a *sukkah*:
 בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לָשֵׁב בַּסֻּכָּה.
Baruh atah ado-nai, eloheinu meleh ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu leishev ba-sukkah.
 We praise you, *Eternal God*, Ruler of the world, who makes us holy with commandments, and commands us to sit in the *sukkah*.
- Contribute a decoration you make at home.
- Imagine living in *sukkah* for several months during the harvest season. Talk about what it might have felt like for the ancient Jewish farmers.
- Take a photograph of the *sukkah* with your family inside.

¹ *Pesah* and *Shavuot* are the other two pilgrimage festivals.

- Have your child draw a picture of the *sukkah*, including the decorations found inside.
- Some synagogues have special children's services for *Sukkot* that include a visit to the congregation's *sukkah*. Explore the possibilities with your own congregation and spend time in its *sukkah*. If you do not belong to a synagogue, any would warmly welcome your family.



Sukkot is a holiday expressing gratitude to God for what we are given. Talk with your children about those things for which you are grateful. Ask them to share their thoughts, as well. Make a family mural of your answers and use it as a *Sukkah* decoration.



Take your children to a grocery store and show them the fall fruits and vegetables, such as pumpkins and gourds. Or, take them to a farm that allows you to harvest your own fruits. Use this as a reminder that *Sukkot* was a time when the Jews celebrated their fall harvest by bringing the best of their crops to The Temple in Jerusalem.

- Harvest foods (or buy them) and hang them in a *sukkah*.
- If you don't have access to a *sukkah* you can still enjoy the fall harvest foods by allowing your children to help you make a "*Sukkot* centerpiece" or "arrangement" with the foods they chose or harvested.



Talk with your children about *Hahnasat Orhim* (the Jewish value of hospitality) and what it means to be hospitable to guests. How can your family be better hosts and hostesses?

The other side of being a good host or hostess is being a good guest. Discuss with your child what this means. When your children are guests in someone's home, encourage them to say thank you when leaving and, if applicable, to write a thank you note. If you were a guest in someone else's *sukkah*, your children can decorate the thank you note with *Sukkot* symbols.

For additional background information, family activities, and holiday recipes, see:
<http://www.iccathisnewmonth.org> (click on *Tishrei*)
 or <http://uahc.org/educate/parent/> (click on *Sukkot*)

