

## Sukkot

Sukkot is one of the most joyful festivals on the Jewish calendar. A harvest holiday that also commemorates the Jews' journey through the desert, Sukkot reminds us of the importance of home, the bounty of the earth and the *mitzvah* of hospitality, or *hachnasat orchim*. Spending time in a *sukkah* provides an opportunity to think about how fortunate we are to have a permanent home.

### Watch

#### Noam's Sukkot

This short documentary tells the story of Noam, an Israeli boy, who prepares for Sukkot by building a *sukkah* with his family and helping out on their *etrog* farm. Noam introduces viewers to two important symbols of Sukkot: the *lulav* and *etrog*, and talks about where they come from.



### Discuss

**Questions to spark group conversation.**

What do you love about your home? What are the things that make it special? What do you think it means to “feel at home”? When you go away, what do you miss about home? How do you think the Jewish people felt having to wander for so many years living in *sukkot*?

### Activities

**Ideas to further engage families in your community with Jewish concepts highlighted in *Shalom Sesame*.**

#### ❖ From the Tree to the Market

Noam's family has an *etrog* farm. Watch the video together and discuss what happens to the *etrog* from the first time you see it on the tree. You can ask the children to draw the *etrog* on its journey from the tree to the market, cut up the pictures that represent each step and create a sequencing card game. This is one of the ways children can learn that things we often take for granted are the result of a process and the efforts of many individuals.

### ❖ **Mitzvah Recycling**

In some Jewish communities an item that was used to perform one *mitzvah*, like the *etrog*, is recycled to be used for another *mitzvah*. Together, insert cloves into the *etrog* and then let it dry for a few weeks. Show members of your group how they helped transform the *etrog* into a fragrant spice that can be used for the *havdalah* ceremony at the end of Shabbat.

### ❖ **Imagine You Were There**

Imagine that you and your group are about to go on a journey through the desert. How will you travel, and who will come with you? What will it be like to sleep in a small hut and look up at the stars? Write down what you and your students imagine you might discover on this adventure, and draw pictures of your temporary home in the desert.

## Watch

### Abraham and the Three Guests

On Sukkot, as on many other Jewish holidays, it is customary to perform the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim*, welcoming guests by inviting friends and family to the *sukkah*. In this video, Abraham does four things that comprise the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim*: he greets his guests warmly, he helps them refresh from the journey, he offers them food, and he accompanies them on their way.



## Discuss

Do you ever invite guests to your home? How do you make your guests feel welcome? What do you like about having guests over? Are you ever a guest in someone else's home? How do you think a good guest should behave? In the video, Abraham and Sarah model how to be good hosts. What are the different things they do for their visitors?

## Activities

### ❖ **Welcome guests to your class**

The Hebrew phrase for hospitality is *hachnasat orchim*. This is a *mitzvah* that members of your community can practice by inviting other groups to your synagogue or community space. You

### Related Book Suggestions from The PJ Library

- [Sadie's Sukkah Breakfast](#) by Jamie Korngold
- [The House on the Roof](#) by David Adler
- [Bubbe Isabella and the Sukkot Cake](#) by Kelly Terwilliger

can work with children and families in the community to create invitations and welcoming traditions, and talk about the *mitzvah* of *hachnasat orchim*.

❖ **Study the Torah story**

Read or share the original story found in the book of Genesis in the Torah, and discuss the differences between the story and the video. Have your group retell the story and add their own illustrations. Trying to recreate the story can foster children's imaginations and link them to the chain of the Jewish interpretive tradition.

❖ **Bring Abraham & Sarah's tent to your class**

Set up an actual *mitzvah*-tent in your community space! Recreate the setting of the story with costumes, jewelry, and any other necessary props. Let the children play in this space and designate it as a special *mitzvah* space in the classroom, where students can go to work out conflicts and think of ways in which to act on their values.

❖ **Contextualize the story**

This story took place near Beersheva, a desert city in the southern part of Israel. You can learn more about desert conditions with your class through books, photographs and video (including the clips about the desert in the Israel section of [ShalomSesame.org](http://ShalomSesame.org)). Understanding the physical context of the story can help families better understand the plot, and the extent of Abraham's generosity.

## Shalom Sesame at Home

- Even if a family doesn't build a *sukkah*, they can still experience the feeling of living in a temporary dwelling by building a fort or tent in the backyard, spending time in it, and discussing what it might have been like for the Israelites. Children can invite friends to their temporary "home" and practice the *mitzvah* of hospitality.

