

A project of The Center for the Jewish Future  
The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

# Sukkot *To-Go*

## 5768

Available at The Marcos & Adina Katz YUTorah.org

## *Family Program*

For Families with Children Ages 8 – 12



the Center for the  
**Jewish Future**



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Rabbi Kenneth Brander, *Dean, Center for the Jewish Future*

Dear Friends,

It is my sincere hope that the Torah found in this virtual ספר may serve to enhance your יום טוב (holiday) and your לימוד (study).

We have designed this project not only for the individual, studying alone, but perhaps even more for a חברותא (a pair studying together) that wish to work through the study matter together, or a group engaged in facilitated study.

With this material, we invite you to join our *Beit Midrash*, wherever you may be, להגדיל תורה ולהאדירה (to enjoy the splendor of Torah) and to engage in discussing a matter that touches on a most contemporary matter, and which is rooted in the timeless arguments of our great sages from throughout the generations.

בברכת חג שמח,

Rabbi Kenneth Brander

Isaac Shalev, Editor

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# 1. *Sukkot* For Families

By Aaron Steinberg

## *Introduction*

On *Sukkot*, Jews around the world leave their homes and venture into the wild. Well, to their backyards, anyway. As they venture out of their homes, however, they are confronted by the outside world. What relationship are we as Jews meant to have with the rest of the world? We are citizens of that world, but we're only .002 percent of the global population. How do we interact with the other 6 billion people? Do we have an *obligation* to interact with the outside world? Is it simply allowed but not required? Maybe we're supposed to have as little as possible to do with non-Jews?

The *Nevi'im* thought about this question, and introduced the concept of *Or LaGoyim*, generally translated as "A Light Unto the Nations." In Isaiah 42:6, the prophet describes how God was not content with *Bnei Yisrael* simply working on becoming a righteous nation; He wanted them to become a "light for the nations, so that [His] salvation may extend to the ends of the earth."

But what does that really mean? How does one become a "light unto the nations?" Generally there are two different understandings of *Or LaGoyim*. The first explains that the Jewish people must create a perfect society unto themselves (The State of Israel), and by setting a good example, the rest of the world will learn how to create their own ideal societies.

According to the second exposition, the Jewish people are commanded to go out into the world and help. That Jews must actively seek ways to improve the lives of Jews and non-Jews alike.

While both theories are valid, the second one has some support in another concept *Chazal* explore called *Darchei Shalom*. In Tractate *Gittin* 61A, the Rabbis teach that a Jew is required to give charity to the non-Jewish poor just like she gives charity to Jewish poor. They also teach that a Jew must visit sick non-Jews the same way he would visit a sick Jew.

When the Torah describes the three festivals *Bnei Yisrael* celebrate each year, it describes *Sukkot* differently than the other two. It mentions the unique aspect of being

## ***Sukkot To-Go 5768 / 2007***

happy. "You shall **rejoice** on your Festival... and you will be completely **joyous**." (Deut. 16:14-15) But how are we supposed to be happy when we know there are people in need around the world? *Sukkot* is a time of the year to increase happiness, and as Mark Twain said, "Whoever is happy will make others happy, too." *Sukkot* is the time to look around the world and see how we can help others and make the entire world a better place to live.

This packet contains mini biographies of four prominent Jews who lived in the last 100 years and dedicated their lives to making the world a better place. Bella Abzug was a successful politician and fighter for equal rights. Joe Lieberman is a United States Senator who was also the Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee in 2000. Ruth Messinger is the head of a Jewish organization working to help people around the world. Elie Wiesel is a Holocaust survivor who has dedicated his life to fighting human rights abuses. Allow your children to read the scripts for these leaders during a meal in the *Sukkah* to create an interactive experience.

Also in this packet is an exploration into the symbolic meaning of three *Sukkot* customs. Each of these customs relates to a Jew's obligation to help others, and each comes along with an activity that can be done in and around the *Sukkah*. Learn about these symbols and enjoy the activities throughout the *chag*.

I hope this packet allow you to have an interactive family *Sukkot*, as you explore what a Jew's role in the world is, and put some of those ideas into practice!

*Chag Sameach,*

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## 5. Sukkot For Families

### The Sukkah

“You will dwell in booths for seven days; all natives of Israel shall dwell in booths.” (Leviticus 23:42)

Every year on Sukkot, we leave our homes to go live in what is pretty much a hut. We do this to remind ourselves what *Bnei Yisrael* had to do after they left Egypt and were wandering in the desert. During the day they were protected by God’s Clouds of Glory and at night a pillar of fire protected them. Just like *Bnei Yisrael* trusted that God would protect them from harm and danger while they were in the desert, we also rely on God to keep us safe in the Sukkah.



Believe it or not, there are real people in the world today who have been forced to leave their homes and run for safety. Some of these people come from a place called Darfur, in the western part of the African country of Sudan. Other people in Sudan have attacked people from Darfur, and hundreds of thousands of Darfurians have been forced to leave their homes and enter a desert hoping to stay safe. Many of them are staying in refugee camps to try to stay safe. They are now trying to live in tents and huts, and have to rely on God’s protection to keep them alive.

#### 1.

*Mishnah.* All seven days of Sukkot, a person makes the Sukkah into a fixed home, and their fixed home into a temporary dwelling. If rain is falling, when are you allowed to return to your home? When the rain is so bad that your porridge is ruined by the water.

*Gemara.* How do you make the *Sukkah* into your fixed home? If you have nice dishes, bring them into the *Sukkah*. If you have beautiful linens, bring them into the *Sukkah*. You should eat, drink, and relax in the *Sukkah*.

*Sukkah 28b*

The *Mishnah* and *Gemara* in *Massechet Sukkah* relate the following about living in the Sukkah:

When *Sukkot* time comes around, we are supposed to bring all of our belongings into the *Sukkah*, and abandon our usual home. We know we can always rely on it as a backup, but only when it is very uncomfortable.

It is important to remember that while we have our warm homes to return to if it is raining or very cold, many people who live in huts and tents all year-round don’t have anywhere to go when the weather is poor. We should appreciate what we have, and work together to help those in need all around the world.

Make building the *Sukkah* a family activity. Allow your children to appreciate the

## **Sukkot To-Go 5768 / 2007**

amount of work that goes into building a makeshift home that will last you for one week. Small children can help when it comes to the decorating, and older children can help with the construction itself.

Make sure that safety comes first, and if there is not someone to watch young children to make sure they don't get hurt, it might be best for them to stay inside for the building process. While the *Sukkah* is a fun week-long campout in the backyard, it can also serve as a lesson in appreciating the value of a home and appreciating the protection we receive from God daily.

For an interesting look at how *Sukkot* might look, check this out:

<http://www.virtualjerusalem.com/jeisholidays/sukkot/naot.htm>

*\*note: Jewish holidays is misspelled in the url missing the 'w' and the 'h'*

### **Brief Summary of the Crisis in Darfur**

Since early 2003, Sudanese government soldiers and their militiamen, called the Janjaweed, have fought rebel groups in the Western region of Darfur. The government's strategy has been to carry out systematic assaults against civilians of the same ethnic groups as the rebels: the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masaalit. Rebels have committed some attacks against civilians, but the Sudanese military and militia have perpetrated the violence.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians have died from violence, disease, and starvation, and other horrible human rights abuses have occurred. Approximated 2.5 million people have been forced out of their homes, had their villages destroyed and their belongings stolen. Most of those displaced are lacking food, water, health care, and shelter.

The situation in Darfur was deemed a genocide by the United States Holocaust Museum in 2004, and was later determined such by the US government. The term genocide was first introduced in 1944 to describe the Holocaust.

In order to help these displaced Darfurians, countries around the world have to put pressure on Sudan to stop the genocide. China has a good economic relationship with Sudan, but has refused, so far, to demand a cessation of violence. The United Nations has finally decided that they must send peacekeeping forces into Darfur. If they are properly supported, they will be able to make a difference in the lives of millions.

### **Learning in Action with your Children**

Sit down with your children, and teach them about the situation in Darfur. If done correctly, there is an age-appropriate way to talk about Darfur with children ranging from elementary school through high school.

After learning about Darfur with your children, send a message to your congressman to ask them to help the people of Darfur. If your kids are older, help them draft a letter. If

## 5. Sukkot For Families

they are younger, have them draw a picture to accompany a letter you write.

### The Arba Minim

On *Sukkot*, we bring together four different species: the *lulav*, the *etrog*, the *hadassim* and the *aravot*. This is the time of the year when we collect the harvest, and we celebrate by incorporating these plants into our prayers. We are appreciative that we have all the plants that we need, so we use the *Arba Minim* to connect to God through nature.



Back in *Gan Eden*, God told Adam and Eve that they had a right to use the land for their own good, but that they also had the responsibility to protect it. It is up to us as Jews not to just consume the produce of the Earth, but also to learn about it and protect it.

When God gives *Bnei Yisrael* the mitzvah that will apply when they conquer the land of Israel, He tells them that it is forbidden to chop down fruit trees. He explains that unlike humans, a tree cannot run away to protect itself (Deut. 20:19). It is up to us to protect it! From this one *pasuk*, the entire concept of not wasting (*Ba'al Tashchit*) arose. The Rabbis forbade us from wasting anything from food to water to even electricity.

*Sukkot* is the perfect time of the year to connect to the world around us. It is our responsibility to know about the natural world and how we can relate with it. So let's use this *Sukkot* to explore our relationship with the environment, and educate our children as to what they can do to help protect it!

### Why Four Species?

#### Four Different Jews

The four different species represent different types of people. The *etrog* is both tasty and good smelling, and represents a Jew with both wisdom and good deeds. The *lulav*, whose fruit tastes good, but has no aroma, represents a Jew with only wisdom. The *hadassim*, which smell pleasant, but have no flavor, represent a Jew who only does good deeds, and the plain *aravot*, that have neither scent nor taste, symbolize the Jew who is not wise, and who does not do good deeds.

We make an effort to bring together all types of Jews for the holiday of *Sukkot*, and create a sense of unity and happiness amongst the Jewish people.

#### Four Body Parts

They four species also represent four different parts of the human body. The *etrog* is a

## **Sukkot To-Go 5768 / 2007**

wonders of the world God gave us. The *aravot* leaves look like lips through which we are able to express our thoughts and feelings.

We bring together these different parts of the body to remember how our entire bodies are put into service and celebration of God on this holiday.

### **How do we hold them?**

In order to hold the four species, we need to use both hands. In the right hand we take the *lulav* that has the *hadassim* and *aravot* tied to them (*hadassim* on the *lulav's* right, *aravot* on its left). In the left hand we hold the etrog. In order to perform the mitzvah, we hold two together and say the *bracha*.

In order to say the *bracha* before we do the *mitzvah*, many people hold the etrog upside down, and then flip it over after the *bracha* is said. But why would it matter if the *etrog* is upside down? Why should it matter which direction it is facing as long as you're holding it?

The *halacha* is that have to hold the four species the same way they grow. If you don't hold it the right way, you are missing out on the whole point that this is a plant. When we incorporate these plants into the service, we have to learn about them and hold them in the proper way.

### **Explore the Outdoors on Sukkot**

Take the lesson of the upside-down etrog that we have to understand a little bit more about nature, and learn about the plants that are around us. Schedule a quick trip out of the *Sukkah* and look around at the nature in your back yard. If you live in an urban area, try to find the nearest park. Go around and try to take a survey of the local foliage. Try to do some research into the area, and learn about native plants to your area.

### **I-Spy Binoculars**

Before a visit to a park, have your child decorate two toilet paper rolls. Staple them together to make mini-binoculars. Take them outside for a game of "I Spy" looking for items from nature. Look for things nearby, in middle range and far away.

### **Picture Album and Decorations**

Take a picture or draw what you see. Find leaves on the ground, and trace them into a notebook. Color them in with all of the colors you can imagine. If you are going to collect anything, make sure that it is not living because usually that involves killing it.

Draw the scenery as you see it around you. Hang up some of those drawings in the your *Sukkah* to serve as decorations.



## 5. Sukkot For Families

### Learn and Explore

To learn more about the plants you find in the area, do a little research into what you find.

For information on trees in your area, check out [www.arborday.org/trees](http://www.arborday.org/trees)

To identify leaves you find, check out [www.oplin.org/tree/leaf/byleaf.html](http://www.oplin.org/tree/leaf/byleaf.html)

If you run into any animals, try [www.enature.com](http://www.enature.com)

The important this is to get out of the house, look around and explore. You'll be amazed at what you find, and you'll have a great time outdoors with your kids.

### *Simchat Beit HaShoeva* –

Sukkot is the only time of the year when water was included along with the sacrifices in the *Beit HaMikdash*. The water that was used in the ceremony was drawn from the nearby *Shiloach* Pool. The drawing of the water was accompanied by a huge celebration called a *Simchat Beit HaShoeva*. The celebration of incorporating pure natural water into the Temple service connects *Bnei Yisrael* to the world around them.



The *Mishnah* in *Massechet Sukkah* gives the following description of the *Simchat Beit HaShoeva*.

### 2.

*Mishnah:* Whoever did not see the *Simchat Beit HaShoeva* never saw rejoicing in their life. At the end of the first day of *Sukkot*, the *Kohanim* and *Levi'im* went down to the Women's Courtyard, where they made a great arrangement. There were golden candelabras there to illuminate the whole thing, and there were four golden bowls on each one to hold the oil. There were four ladders for each candelabrum, and four young *Kohanim* were assigned to pour 120 *lug* of oil into each bowl. They created wicks for the candles from the worn-out trousers and belts of the *Kohanim*, and would light them. There was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that was not illuminated by the light of the *Simchat Beit HaShoeva*. *Chassidim* and righteous people would dance for the onlookers with flaming torches in their hands, singing the praises of God. The *Levi'im* would play trumpets, harps and other instruments from the 15 steps of the Courtyard... they sounded the *tekiah-teruah-tekiah* of the *shofar*, and would walk to the gate leading to the east... they would turn to the temple, and declare that their eyes were towards God...

*Mishna Sukkah 5:1-2*

## ***Sukkot To-Go 5768 / 2007***

The occasion was a pure celebration of the connection between the Jewish people and God. The light of the celebration was so powerful that it pervaded every home on every street of Jerusalem. *Sukkot* is a time of celebration, and is important to promote happiness, and spread happiness to others on this occasion.

### **Host Your Own Simchat Beit HaShoeva**

To get your family more in tune with how important water is in our lives, have a *Simchat Beit HaShoeva* in your *Sukkah*.

Here's what you're going to need:

- ◆ Funky music on your boom box
- ◆ Yummy snacks and drinks
- ◆ Water Experiments and Games
- ◆ Water conservation Fact Sheet

### **The Goal:**

What you are trying to do is get your children to care about water conservation, and understand how important water is in our lives. The Torah tells us to celebrate water on Sukkot, and we are going to make sure we don't waste this precious treasure.

**Through experiments and games we are going to learn about how water works, and how to conserve water!**

## 5. Sukkot For Families

### Water Experiment:

With this experiment, you are going to create your own water cycle in a jar. All you need is:

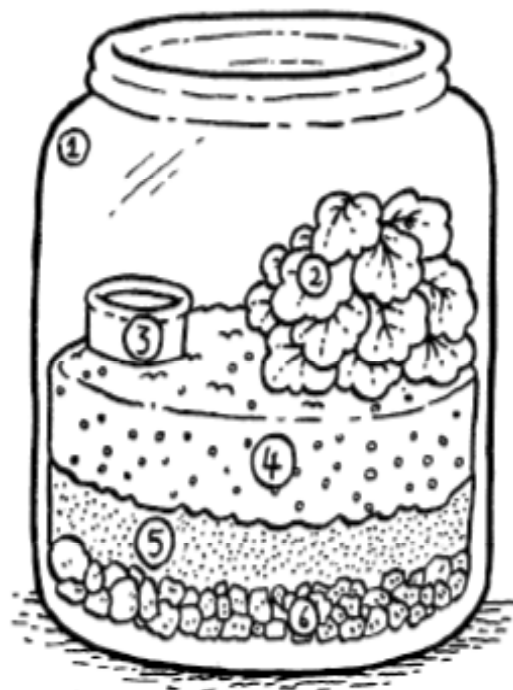
1. Jar
2. Plants
3. Water-filled Bottle Cap
4. Soil
5. Sand
6. Small Rocks.

#### Step 1:

Fill jar just like in the illustration to the right, and put the lid on.

#### Step 2:

Put the jar in a sunny place, and see how the water cycle works.



Explain to your children how water evaporates into the air, and then rains down to the ground. Once into the ground it pools and turns into lakes and rivers. The water cycle means that if we let our water get dirty, we're going to get the same dirty water later in the cycle. So let's keep it clean!

### Water Challenge:

*Warning: This experiment may get you wet. You should probably do this one in the Sukkah.*

For this challenge, you will need a bucket of water, an empty aluminum pan, cardboard paper towel rolls, empty milk jugs, building blocks, other random recycled building supplies, and scissors (used by an adult).

Place the bucket of water on one end of the table, and the aluminum pan on the other end. Your bucket is a lake, and your aluminum pan is a town of people who live very far from the lake. Your challenge is to help get water to this town by creating an aqueduct from your supplies.

Only 1% of the earth's water is drinkable, and many people live far from water. It is a challenge to make sure we keep water clean and available for people around the world.

## **Wacky Water Fact Sheet**

There is about the same amount of water on the Earth now as there was millions of years ago.

Nearly 97% of the world's water is salty or otherwise undrinkable. Another 2% is locked in ice caps and glaciers. That leaves 1% for all of our needs.

Water regulates the Earth's temperature. It also regulates the temperature of the human body.

The average total home water use for each person in the US is about 80 gallons a day.

More water is used in the bathroom than any other place in the home.

A dripping faucet can waste up to 2,000 gallons of water a year.

Although a person can live without food for a month, a person can only live without water for approximately a week.

The human body is 70% water, and blood is 83% water.

If everyone in the US flushed the toilet just one less time per day, we could save a lake full of water about one mile long, one mile wide and four feet deep.

## **Six Simple Water Conservation Tips**

Turn off the faucet when you're brushing your teeth.

Take shorter showers than you usually would (try an Israeli shower where you turn off the water in the middle to soap up!)

Don't leave the faucet dripping – get it fixed!

Don't do laundry until you have a full load.

Don't use your toilet as a trash can. Throw tissues and dead bugs into the garbage instead of flushing them.

On hot days, go to the local pool instead of playing in your front yard with the hose.

## ***Sukkot To-Go 5768 / 2007***

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