



**Sukkot Mishpacha**  
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**Subject Area:** Jewish History & Culture, Hebrew, Holidays, Prayer, Talmud/Torah, Israel, Eco-Judaism, Art

**Single lesson plan:** This was an actual program run by Congregation Har Hashem in partnership with the Boulder Jewish Community Center. We hope to repeat it again next year, and would welcome anyone in this community (or other communities) who wish to replicate it.

**Target Age:** Preschool through Second Grade

**Objectives:**

- Students will be able to learn about Sukkot at a pumpkin patch. This enables the concept in Jewish education of “meeting Jews where they’re at” to be employed. Many parents take their kids to the pumpkin patch in the fall, so why not teach them about Sukkot and how the agricultural cycle corresponds to the Jewish calendar in the process?
- Parents and students will understand the connection between Jews and our planet. The idea of eating locally and from our earth is incorporated into one of the teachings of Sukkot. We celebrate Sukkot and the harvest on a farm, where much of the harvest originates. This provides the children with a first-hand opportunity to understand where some of their food comes from.
- To provide a chance for families with young children to meet other Jews within their demographic and to begin to weave Jewish traditions and customs into their lives. This program is especially valuable for interfaith and/or unaffiliated families and/or families who do not possess the skill set to create a Jewish experience for their children and want to gain exposure to Jewish living.

**Brief Summary:**

Families arrive at the pumpkin patch and check in at the welcome table. Nametags are provided, and families are instructed to give themselves a self-guided tour of the pumpkin patch or to host a Sukkot scavenger hunt during this time. We can hide certain Sukkot related items at the farm or use existing farm structures in this hunt. Each family can do the scavenger hunt on their own or with other families. This enables them to explore the various activity areas at their own pace, and informally connect with other Jewish families in the process. After an hour or so, everyone convenes for the learning and arts & crafts portion of the program in the make-shift Sukkah.

**Steps:**

After exploring the farm on their own, participants can gather in the make-shift Sukkah. They can do the art project on their own. The suggested art project is that the children & parents make decorations to hang in their own or another Sukkah in their community. They will make decorations from gourds and/or pumpkins provided by the farm. Children can draw pictures and put stickers on their gourd/pumpkin to make them festive. Parents can insert an eyehook into the top, so it can be hung from a Sukkah.

After most have finished the craft, everyone will be gathered and asked to sit in a circle. The leader will introduce the holiday of Sukkot. If one of the group leaders is musical, a couple of Sukkot songs may be sung with guitar. Hinei Mah Tov alludes to how nice it is for a group to sit together and is a good icebreaking song since most people are familiar with it, and Ufros Aleinu refers to how G-d spreads a shelter of peace over all of us, similar to how we sit under a shelter (i.e. a sukkah) on Sukkot.

In the spirit of making everyone feel comfortable, the group leader can facilitate an icebreaker. Children may take turns introducing themselves (with the help of a parent if necessary). The concept of an icebreaker can be linked to how Sukkot is a very warm and inviting holiday because our ancestors (Abraham and Sarah) left one side of their tent open so that everyone would know they were welcome.

Next, the group leader can discuss why we're at a pumpkin patch to celebrate Sukkot and how the Jewish calendar connects to the seasons. The tradition of praying for rain during this holiday, especially since there hasn't been any in Israel since Pesach, may also be addressed. The lulav should be waved in all directions to symbolize that G-d is everywhere (children can imitate what the group leader is doing with their own imaginary lulav), and the etrog should be passed around so that everyone has an opportunity to sniff it.

At this point in the program, a children's story, such as "Tamar's Sukkah" by Ellie Gellman, can be read. Then, the group leader can talk about how it is traditional for a family to eat their meals in a Sukkah, "Sukkah hop", and maybe even sleep in the Sukkah. It should be explained that at the very least, Jews are commanded to bless the wine and challah in the Sukkah. The blessings should be sung, and the grape juice and challah can then be enjoyed.

Participants may also be invited to have a snack which is tied to the harvest such as dried fruit, pumpkin muffins or bread, sunflower seeds, etc. This also ties to Sukkot, as it is a mitzvah to eat in the Sukkah. After a few minutes of eating and socializing, the program can be concluded with the singing of Shalom Chaverim.

**Supplies/Materials:**

- Nametags
- Guitar and Song sheets
- Children's Book for Sukkot
- Challah, Challah Plate, Challah Cover, Grape Juice, Kiddush Cup, Paper or Plastic Cups (which should be recycled after using)
- Snacks
- Lulav & Etrog
- Craft project: Gourd/pumpkins, eyehooks, string, permanent markers, stickers
- Scavenger hunt materials (whatever items you will be hiding, directions, etc.)

**References:**

- HaSafria Library at the Boulder JCC or PJ Library for appropriate Sukkot books
- Websites:
  - o Local farm websites
  - o Jewish websites: [www.jewfaq.org](http://www.jewfaq.org),  
[www.torah tots.com/holidays/sukkot/sukkot.htm](http://www.torah tots.com/holidays/sukkot/sukkot.htm)