



NEVER TOO QUIET

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Rabbi Pinchas was worn out and tired. Everyone kept coming to him with their problems—he had no time to study! But when he stopped accepting visitors, it felt very quiet. Is it possible it was too quiet?

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Showing hospitality toward guests – in Hebrew, *hachnasat orchim* – is an important Jewish value throughout the year, but takes on a unique twist during Sukkot, when it is common practice to symbolically invite sacred ancestors into the sukkah to celebrate. Collectively, these esteemed guests are known as the *Ushpizin*, from the Aramaic word for “guests.” Some people have the custom of inviting Abraham on the first night of Sukkot, as Rabbi Pinchas did in this story.

Abraham is considered the father of the Jewish people. Many other religions also trace their monotheistic spiritual beliefs to Abraham, including Islam, Christianity, Rastafarianism, and Baha’i. The Jewish people—including those who convert to Judaism—are all considered to be descendants of Abraham and Sarah.

In many Biblical stories, Abraham appears as a righteous man with a commitment to peace, compassion, and hospitality; in others, he is depicted as a man who would go so far as to lie to save his own life. Like us all, he is a person with both strengths and weaknesses.

In this story, did Rabbi Pinchas’ prayer bring Abraham into the sukkah? What do you think helps the rabbi find a balance between “people with their squabbles and their problems, their troubles and their sorrows—and their laughter and joy”?

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

In *Never Too Quiet*, Rabbi Pinchas is finally forced to confront the fact that he has grown too isolated from people. Encourage your family to talk about how every person—including parents and children—must find a sense of balance between the sometimes noisy pleasures of companionship and the quiet contentment of being alone.

Building a sukkah can be great fun for children, as it combines the allure of childhood forts with the thrill of camping and eating outdoors. Planning the construction of a sukkah is part of the excitement, so enjoy brainstorming what materials and techniques would meet these kosher requirements:

- At least two-and-a-half sides of the sukkah should be stable enough so as not to blow away in the wind.
- The roof can be made of anything that grows from the ground and is cut off, including branches, lumber, or corn stalks.
- No part of the roof should be nailed together or tied down.
- The parts of the roof should be constructed so that the sukkah is shady during the day, but also so that the stars can be seen at night.