

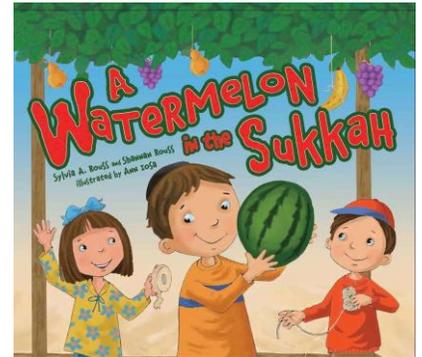
Read the PJ Library Book

A Watermelon in the Sukkah (4's)

By Sylvia A. Rouss and Shannan Rouss

Illustrated by Ann Iosa

Published by Kar-Ben Publishing



Synopsis

Miss Sharon asks the children in her class to bring their favorite fruits to school in order to decorate their sukkah. Children bring bananas, pomegranates, and grapes to school – but Michael rolls in a large watermelon. “Who has an idea for how we can hang Michael’s favorite fruit?” Miss Sharon asks. The children try a variety of methods to no avail. Michael feels dejected, but a piece of playground equipment inspires him to solve the problem and hang the watermelon to everyone’s delight.

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) - *Su-kot* - סוכות

Beautifying the commandment - *Hi-dur mitz-vah* - הדור מצוה

Problem-solving/optimism - *op-ti-mi-yut* - אופטימיות

Sukkot. Sukkot is a seven-day festival that comes on the heels of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. It is one of the three pilgrimage holidays, for which many Jews traveled to the site of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Sukkot is also a celebration of the fall harvest. This is one of the reasons many people choose to decorate their sukkah with fruit. The Hebrew calendar date is the 15th day of the month of *Tishrei*. This date always coincides with the evening of the full moon closest to the autumnal equinox, otherwise known as the Harvest Moon.



[For more about Sukkot please read *A Very Crowded Sukkah* Resource Guide.]

Beautifying the commandment – Hiddur mitzvah. According to our ancient sages, the idea of aesthetically enhancing a *mitzvah* (literally commandment, but often translated as good deed) comes from the biblical verse "This is my God and I will glorify Him" (Exodus 15:2). This proclamation comes just after the Israelites have safely crossed the Sea of Reeds on their escape from Egypt, and Moses spontaneously leads the people in song praising God. (This is the first instance of song or poetry in the Bible.) Adding an artistic element to performing a mitzvah reflects an attitude of commitment beyond the routine. This is why we see beautifully decorated *sukkot* (plural of *sukkah* – the temporary booth constructed for the holiday of Sukkot) and ornate ritual objects such as candle holders and Kiddush cups.



[For more about “Hiddur mitzvah” please read the *Sadie’s Sukkah Breakfast Resource Guide*.]

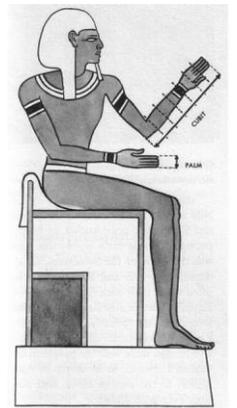
Problem solving/Optimism – Optimiyut. Judaism is a very optimistic religion. From the first chapter of the Torah we read, “God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). Jewish mystics take this idea one step further. They reason that God created the world with His words “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3), and humankind is made in God’s image. Therefore, a person’s positive outlook and language can have a constructive effect on the world.

Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

How would your classroom change?
How will families be involved?

In the Classroom / Centers

- ☆ **Sukkot:** The laws of *sukkah* building say a *sukkah*’s height, width and depth must measure at least 7 *tepachim* (*tepachim* is the plural of *tepach* - the width of four fingers of your hand, or palm), and it cannot be taller than a height of 20 *amot* (*amot* is plural for *amah* - the length from the elbow to the tip of your middle finger, or cubit.) Do some *sukkah math* with your students, and find out the smallest or tallest possible *sukkah* for your classroom. Now decorate.
- ☆ **Sukkot:** “And you shall live in the *sukkah* seven days” (Leviticus 23:42). Many people eat and sleep in the *sukkah*. Which school activities can you do in a *sukkah* that you ordinarily do in the classroom? Can you arrange to have **nap-time, snack time** or **story time** in a *sukkah*?
- ☆ **Hiddur mitzvah:** Here is an idea for a *sukkah art project* using recycled keys. Ask the parents of your students to send to school those extra keys-to-nothing that may be lying around the house. Hang them from a hanger or crisscrossed Popsicle sticks to make wind chimes. Add them to the *sukkah*, enhancing the experience of being there with the lovely sounds.
- ☆ **Hiddur mitzvah:** *Hiddur mitzvah* can last all year long. Enhancing your **classroom environment** shows how much you respect your space. Stand in the doorway to your room and snap a photo. Look at this picture with your students and choose a beautifying project to work on, such as window décor or organizing a messy shelf.
- ☆ **Problem solving/Optimism:** Have a variety of puzzles available in your **manipulatives** area. Rotate out the puzzles regularly.
- ☆ **Problem solving/Optimism:** Many schools implement “**Question-of-the-Day**” to stimulate discussion, problem solving and graphing. Thought provoking queries such as “How do you think a squirrel get acorns from an oak tree?” promotes a child’s ability to theorize. Listening to their theories boosts self-confidence.



Bridging Home and School

In a Stew

Sukkot provides an excellent opportunity to study and taste fall harvest fruits and vegetables. Ask your families for some of their favorite soup and stew recipes, and invite volunteers to help you cook up some of these delicacies. You might choose to make a batch of applesauce. [Visit pjfor.me/resource-guides for Lisa's Always Delicious Never Fail Crock Pot Applesauce recipe.] Serve your treats at pick-up time. It would be extra tasty in the sukkah!



Harvest Band

Celebrate the sounds of nature. Take a walk with your students and collect sticks, leaves, seed pods, and acorns. Provide some bumpy gourds and experiment with the sounds you can create with these objects. As families come to school one morning, play music and invite everyone to add their unique rhythm to the music.

Family Engagement at Home

If at first you don't succeed...

Tell your students' parents you are helping their children adopt a "can-do" attitude, like the children in the book. Ask the parents to look for examples of their children solving a problem at home, such as keeping paper napkins from blowing away when you eat outside or getting books to fit neatly on a shelf. Perhaps the children will share some examples with the class.

Share

 your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... about life in the sukkah

Decorating and spending time in a sukkah is a wonderful thing for children and adults of all ages. Help your students capture and remember those feelings by writing down their comments and reading back their words on another day. For example, the teacher might say, "Remember when we went into the sukkah to hang our wind chimes? Rebecca told us, 'It sounds like outside, but it's quiet.' After we added our wind chimes Henry said, 'Now it sounds like outside with children.'"

Then share with all of us on our private Facebook group page! <http://pjfor.me/pjgts-facebook>

More

 resources and websites for inspiration

Fall harvest Guide <http://localfoods.about.com/od/whatsinseason/a/FallFruitVeg.htm>

Health and Optimism <http://tinyurl.com/health-and-optimism>

Sukkah World <http://www.sukkahworld.com/rules-of-the-sukkah.asp>

