



THE BEST SUKKOT PUMPKIN EVER

Written by Laya Steinberg

Illustrated by Colleen Madden

When Micah visits the pumpkin patch, he's on a mission to find a great big pumpkin for the sukkah. But the local soup kitchen sure could use a nice, fresh pumpkin. What will Micah do?

JEWISH CONCEPTS

The fall holiday of *Sukkot* is one of the most joyful times of the year in the Jewish calendar. *Sukkot* means “booths” or “huts” in Hebrew; the name refers to the temporary dwellings in which the ancient Israelites lived in the wilderness after being freed from slavery in Egypt. In commemoration, Jewish families build their own *sukkot*, and try to spend as much time as possible in them throughout the eight-day holiday. Eating, spending time with family and friends, and sleeping in the *sukkah* help to create a real sense of connection with the Israelites’ experience.

The *sukkah* experience offers an important lesson. When surrounded by the four sturdy walls and roof of one’s normal house, it can be easy to feel fully self-sufficient in life. However, when one goes outside to sit in the frail shelter of the *sukkah* that sways in the wind, and sees the stars through the patchy roof, it is a powerful reminder of the fragility of life and our interdependence.

In *The Best Sukkot Pumpkin Ever*, Micah and his family show that *Sukkot* can be a wonderful time to work on *tikkun olam*, repairing the world. There may be people in our communities whose daily reality is like that of a shaky *sukkah*, and who may not have a secure home to return to after the holiday. Providing for those in need will enable everyone to be part of the community in experiencing *Sukkot*.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Although there are opportunities for *tikkun olam* every day of the year, your family can enhance the joy of *Sukkot* by making it a special time of reaching out to others. There are eight days of *Sukkot*; you might consider choosing one act of *tikkun olam* to do together for each day of the holiday. Hold a family brainstorming session and see how many ideas you can come up with. No good deed is too small!

One idea is to invite a family in need in your community to join you for a holiday meal in your *sukkah*, if you have one. They may not have been able to build their own, so in addition to providing them with a delicious meal, you will be giving them the opportunity to do the *mitzvah* (commandment) of sitting in the *sukkah*. Your children can help to create a festive environment by making decorations for the *sukkah*.

Beyond *Sukkot*, consider taking some time each evening during dinner to talk as a family about ways each person was able to contribute to *tikkun olam* that day. Children will be proud to share the good things they’ve done, and will be encouraged to do more. Conversations like these will help everyone be on the lookout for opportunities to help others each day.