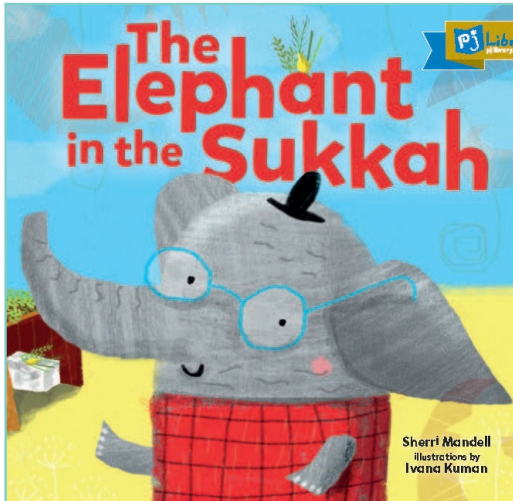


# The Elephant in the Sukkah

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## What makes a good host?

### When the Elephant IS the Room

During the harvest holiday of *Sukkot*, it's customary to build a *sukkah*, a temporary hut that reminds us of the dwellings the Israelites lived in during ancient times. Sukkot offers us the ultimate hands-on project: We not only build a *sukkah*, we spend as much time in it as possible during the weeklong holiday. A *sukkah* needs to have at least three sides and a roof made of branches and greenery. Beyond that, there's a lot of room for variation, as discussion in the Talmud (the core collection of rabbinic writings) makes clear. Can you build a *sukkah* on top of a camel? Some of the rabbis said sure; others said no. Can you use an elephant or other animal as one of the walls? Only if the animal stays in place, the rabbis said. And what happens if the elephant crouches down? Well... it would certainly give new meaning to the phrase "the elephant in the room"!

## HANDS ON!

### Make a Play Sukkah

Kids can enjoy anticipating Sukkot beforehand or extend the celebration afterward by making a play *sukkah*!



#### Supplies

- Cardboard boxes of any size
- Scissors
- Small leafy branches
- Markers, paint, stickers, or other art supplies



Cut the flaps off of your cardboard box so you are left with three walls. Cut off the top of the box (the one facing the ceiling when it's standing up on its side) and lay small branches across the top to create a roof of *s'chach*. Decorate the *sukkah* with art supplies. Now invite friends! A mini *sukkah* can accommodate stuffed animal guests (perhaps a small elephant?), while a larger one is the perfect place to hang out with the human kind. Enjoy being together!

### Things Are Looking Up

Let's talk about *s'chach*. (Gesundheit!) *S'chach* refers to the branches or greens that create the roof of a *sukkah*. A *sukkah's* roof has to provide shade during the day but be sparse enough so that the stars are visible at night. It's not the sturdiest roof, but that's part of the point. Most of the year we stay cozy and dry indoors, and it's easy to feel complacent. But when we spend time in the *sukkah*, which shakes in the wind and lets the elements in, we are reminded of what's most important: family, friends, and community. Without our normal physical comforts, we can feel true happiness in being satisfied with what we have in that moment. To learn more, visit [pjlibrary.org/elephantsukkah](http://pjlibrary.org/elephantsukkah).

### Come On, Get Happy!

Sukkot is known as *z'man simchateinu*, Hebrew for "the season of our joy." As a passage in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) says, "You shall rejoice before God for seven days." We're literally commanded to get happy — and what better way to do it than to sing! As Henry discovers, the *sukkah* is a great place for a singalong. If you want to host a singalong in a *sukkah*, you can start with *niggunim* — wordless melodies — so guests like Henry don't have to worry about knowing the lyrics. Or you might create song sheets so that everyone can easily follow along. Through the Brenners' joyful music and hospitality, Henry learns what a *sukkah* really is: "A place to be together." Even for elephants.

## TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

**WHOM** would you invite into your *sukkah*?

**HOW** can you include a friend or classmate who might be feeling lonely?

**HENRY** feels happy when he's singing. What activities make you feel happy?