

The Vanishing Gourds

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What can dreams teach us?

An Attitude of Gratitude

Sara's favorite holiday, *Sukkot*, is a harvest celebration—a time to give thanks for all the food we've reaped over the spring and summer. The Hebrew word "sukkot" is both the name of the holiday and the plural form of the word *sukkah*, a temporary hut like the one Sara and her family build. Meant to last for only a week, a *sukkah* serves to remind us of the Jewish people's nomadic past. Many families, including Sara's, decorate their *sukkah* with fruits, vegetables, homemade paper crafts, and whatever else inspires gratitude for the plenty of the past year. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/vanishinggourds.

The More, the Merrier

During *Sukkot*, people spend lots of time in the *sukkah*—eating meals, entertaining friends, and sometimes even sleeping. It's also traditional to host guests and serve them a meal in the *sukkah*. *Hachnasat orchim*, welcoming guests, is an important Jewish *mitzvah* (commandment or good deed) during *Sukkot* and all year long—but it generally applies to humans, not the guests who visited Sara's *sukkah*!

Sleep On It

When Sara slept out in the *sukkah*, she had an important dream. There are many examples in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) of people reflecting on their dreams and understanding more about themselves and their place in the world. The patriarch Jacob dreamed about angels on a ladder, and his son Joseph dreamed about wheat and stars—and all those dreams ended up being glimpses into the future. When Sara wakes up, she is able to think about the squirrels in a new way. But sometimes you have to wait a while before you understand a dream's deeper meaning.

Fuzzy and Feathered Friends

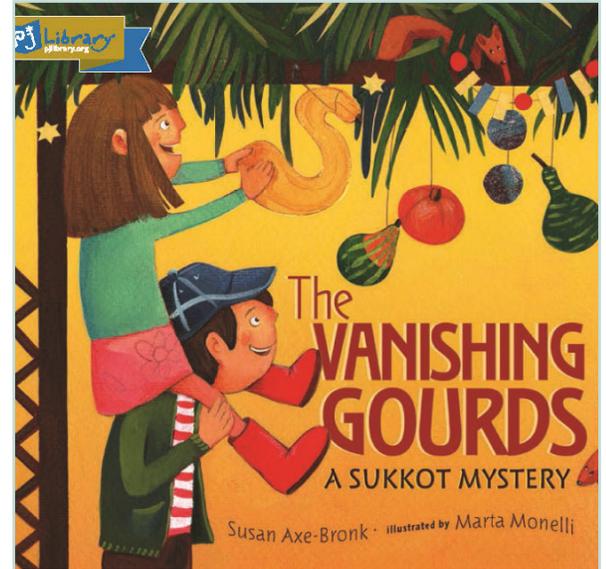
The *mitzvah* that applies to Sara's guests is *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*, the value of caring for animals. When Sara discovers who her mystery visitors are, she's briefly annoyed, but quickly begins thinking about what they need. After all, we living creatures all share the same planet. Looking out for the wildlife in our environment is good for all of us—as Sara learns the following year.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

Why do you think Sara loves *Sukkot*?

Have you had dreams that helped you think about things in a new way?

Why does Sara make sure the squirrels don't go hungry?



HANDS ON!

Care for the Creatures in Your Backyard



At first she's disappointed when her gourds disappear, but soon Sara is happy to help out local wildlife. Here are ways to look out for the critters in your community.



Plant a tree on your property. Just one tree can provide food and lodging for countless species of wildlife.

Avoid pesticides. Organic landscaping takes a bit of doing, but it's better for the birds and the bees.

Keep kitty inside. Cats have a dramatic impact on the songbird population. Indoor cats live longer, healthier lives, anyway.



Feed the birds. A bird feeder can help feathered friends get through a long, cold winter. Wildlife experts don't recommend setting out food for squirrels, but don't worry if a squirrel nibbles the birdseed now and again!