

Value: שְׁלוֹם סֻכַּת Sukkat Shalom

Caregiving Principle: Creating a feeling of safety

The Hebrew phrase, שְׁלוֹם סֻכַּת (*sukkat shalom*), means “shelter of peace,” a place that generates the feeling of safety and protection. It is part of the *Hashkiveinu* blessing in the evening service, in which we request that God:

וּפְרוֹשׁ עָלֵינוּ סֻכַּת שְׁלוֹמֶךָ

U'fros aleinu sukkat sh'lomecha.

“Spread over us Your shelter of peace.”

The phrase, *sukkat shalom*, provides three elements for exploration during this module:

- **The action** - that of spreading, of enveloping, of protecting (“*u'fros* - spread”). In *Hashkiveinu* we ask God to spread over us a shelter of peace, protecting us especially during the dark of night.
- **The image** – that of a shelter, though the actual word used is *sukkah*, which begs the question why refer to a *sukkah* when praying for peace.
“[P]eace is one of the highest of all Jewish values, while the *sukkah* is relatively basic and simple, common and ordinary. Why did he not write, “build over us the stately mansion of your peace,” or “the majestic palace,” or “the grand castle”? Such structures are built on strong foundations, out of concrete or stone; once they are built, they will stand by themselves for hundreds of years. In contrast, a *sukkah* is fragile and vulnerable, exposed to the elements. A strong wind can easily blow it over. It can be undermined by water seeping through the ground or burnt if someone drops a lit match. **You have to watch it almost constantly, care for it incessantly**, lest it be suddenly destroyed.

Peace, too, requires this care and attention. We erect structures of peace with care, but they are all too easily blown over by the strong winds of group hatred and extremism, or undermined by the seeping waters of suspicion, or consumed by the fires of nationalistic self-righteousness. In order for the edifice of peace to remain standing, we have to be constantly on guard; **we cannot take it for granted that peace, once achieved, will automatically endure ...”**

Based on a teaching by Rabbi Marc Saperstein

<https://reformjudaism.org/blog/2012/09/28/sukkah-peace>

- **The value** – that of peace. The Hebrew word *shalom* comes from the root ש.ל.ו connoting wholeness or completeness. From this understanding, peace is much more than ending hostility or violence, rather it encompasses both a personal and communal sense of unity and wholeness.

Whether this module is explored via the static image (a *sukkah* of peace) and/or with attention to an enveloping action (God surrounding us with peace), it is anchored in the first principle for caregivers working with people who have faced trauma – **safety**. As with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs,¹ one cannot progress or succeed unless one’s physiological needs are taken care of (e.g., water, food, shelter) and

¹ <https://www.thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4582571>

one feels physically and emotionally safe. We are part of the network of caregivers for our children that includes parents, teachers, family, friends, healthcare workers and community helpers.

Our module connects to the year's Enduring Understanding in meaningful ways:

- **If I am not for myself, who will be for me?** – We want to empower children with the tools to take care of themselves in a world that is fraught with uncertainty, with fear and with illness.
- **If I am only for myself, what am I?** – We want to empower children to look beyond themselves, to consider their ability to provide safety, healing and wholeness for others by joining together in a network of support and caring.
- **If not now when?** – We want to empower children to take action toward creating *sukkat shalom* for themselves and for others.

It is important to remember that with the stresses and strains of the pandemic - with parents often working at home (or sitting at home, unemployed), with families on top of each other in whatever space their homes or apartments provide, and with illness and death a constant threat or reality – families are under great stress. This module was purposely designed with the image of *sukkat shalom* (shelter of peace) and not the more familiar Hebrew phrase, *sh'lom bayit* (peace in the home). Throughout the module's five weeks, learners are empowered to discover different aspects of what *sukkat shalom* means for themselves and for others in terms of a physical space, but also as a feeling of safety and protection they may receive from important people in their lives. As such, the curriculum builds a toolkit over time to strengthen children and build their resiliency.

At the conclusion of each week, learners are invited to share their creations and discoveries via a *k'vutzah*-specific Flipgrid site, with the teacher spotlighting contributions during the following session.

Note that there are five distinct weeks of learning offered in the overview chart, below (pages 3-4). Depending on the timing of holidays and pop-up or virtual synagogue-related events, an educational program might choose to introduce only four of the sessions. While an ideal calendar would allow for the scheduling of each module without interruption, this decision is for each director to make.

For a two-minute overview of this module
that orients teachers and parents to the learning,
check out this video:

<https://youtu.be/afArswp7lZE>



OVERVIEW GRID

Weekly Focusing Question	Mifgash (the session in which a cohort of learners “meet” the week’s focus)	Grades K-3 Activities (introduced via a subscription-type box) NOTE: Each of the five weeks stand on their own, but build on each other towards an understanding of <i>sukkat shalom</i> – a place and feeling of safety, wholeness and peace.	Grades 4-6 Challenges (introduced via a “launch video”) NOTE: Over the course of the five weeks, learners consider questions of safety, protection and wholeness leading to the development of a creative personal conception of <i>sukkat shalom</i>. Each week builds upon the last. In the fifth week, learners reflect on the physical <i>sukkat shalom</i> they created in week four - where and how they feel safe - and create a blessing for it.
Session 1: What is <i>sukkat shalom</i> ?	Explore images to help understand and define the concept of <i>sukkat shalom</i> , of safety and protection.	<u>In the box:</u> Fabric; iron-on transfer; fabric markers/paint. <u>The task:</u> Decorate a large piece of fabric in the spirit of <i>sukkat shalom</i> . Then, throughout the week, experiment with ways to utilize it as a protective and safe <i>sukkat shalom</i> (create a fort, wear as a cape, use as a comfort-blanket, etc.).	<u>The challenge:</u> Consider, develop and then work out a definition of <i>sukkat shalom</i> via one of two artistic options (sketch/drawing or collage). Share artistic responses with a photo to the group’s Flipgrid.
Session 2: What are examples of <i>sukkat shalom</i> - of safety and protection?	Consider specific examples of others’ personal ideas of <i>sukkat shalom</i> – what is safe and protective?	<u>In the box:</u> Interview board and cards; markers. <u>The task:</u> Interview three familiar people about what <i>sukkat shalom</i> means/looks like to them.	<u>The challenge:</u> Via person-to-person interviews or a photo-hunt, expand an understanding of <i>sukkat shalom</i> beyond the definition – what are the many ways we might be protected by a <i>sukkat shalom</i> , whether physically or emotionally?

Session 3: What does <i>sukkat shalom</i> mean to <u>you</u> ?	Expand learners' personal definitions of <i>sukkat shalom</i> .	<u>In the box:</u> Images/photos; paper; glue stick; water color; brush. <u>The task:</u> Create a collage of what <i>sukkat shalom</i> personally means to you, using provided images and/or creating personal ones.	<u>The challenge:</u> Explore, reflect and then decide where you find <i>sukkat shalom</i> and how you get there. Then map it, act it or draw it.
Session 4: What does <i>sukkat shalom</i> look like?	Discover the concept of <i>sukkat shalom</i> and consider how you might be able to create <i>sukkat shalom</i> in ways other than a physical structure like a <i>sukkah</i> .	<u>In the box:</u> 3 pieces of Shrinky Dink plastic with a hole punched in; 3 key rings; 2-3 permanent markers <u>The task:</u> Create and present a gift to those they interviewed to remind their interviewees (and themselves) of the characteristics of <i>sukkat shalom</i> .	<u>The challenge:</u> Create a large- or small-scale safe-space (a <i>sukkat shalom</i>) representing a physical space, a person that envelopes you in <i>shalom</i> , a feeling. The materials used are up to the learner's imagination – blankets for a fort-like location, Minecraft for a virtual one, boxes of any size, or found materials.
Session 5: What do I now think about <i>sukkat shalom</i> ?	Identify key elements of <i>sukkat shalom</i> in learners' lives, with thought given to the vulnerability of a <i>sukkah</i> and the resilience of those who pay attention to strengthening it.	<u>In the box:</u> Dish soap; glycerin (non-toxic/edible brand); 2-3 straws; cotton gloves <u>The task:</u> Mix the ingredients to make bubbles, noting their fragility but also experimenting with ways to increase their strength using the glycerin. Reflect with an adult on the innate fragility of a bubble and the possibility of strengthening it. Parallel this to <i>sukkat shalom</i> - by paying attention to ways of attaining safety and protection, we can strengthen it and ourselves.	<u>Challenge:</u> Reflect on your <i>sukkat shalom</i> – how it keeps you safe and what steps you might take if it “broke.” Then offer your <i>sukkat shalom</i> a personal blessing of peace, safety and protection.

The Mifgash

The *mifgash* (מִפְגָּשׁ - meeting or gathering) is a 20-30 minute weekly synchronous session with the *k'vutzah* ("group"), comprised of teacher and learners, plus any teaching assistants (*madrichim*). During each *mifgash*, there is opportunity to: check-in with the students; build community; celebrate and share some of the activities/challenges the students accomplished the previous week; and, introduce new content for the upcoming week. Each *mifgash* follows the same format to create a sense of consistency and routine:

- **Greetings/check-in (3 minutes)**

These are hellos to every individual as they enter the meeting and a quick check-in or activity.

Examples include:

- Pass the greeting – Call on someone and ask how they are feeling today and they call on another person in the group.
- Finding each other – Everyone is asked to reach to the people on either side of them and then above and below. The facilitator starts by saying, "Josh – I see you found Amy. Josh, who did Amy find?" Josh looks at Amy's position in the grid and identifies someone she is touching (at least per his screen). Josh says, "I see you found Sean. Amy, who did Sean find?"
- Etc.

- **Reflection/Community Building (4-7 minutes)**

This is a reminder of what happened the last session and the activity or challenge that children worked on. The Flipgrid uploads are referenced and 2-3 children's postings are spotlighted each week (over the course of a number of weeks, everyone will have a chance to be in the spotlight). The teacher might also do a 3-4 minute community-building activity that fits the theme.

- **New Content (15 minutes)**

This week's learning is introduced and the main activity is accomplished together.

- **Launching At-Home Learning (5 minutes)**

The lower elementary and upper elementary learners are introduced to their activities or challenges for the upcoming week. Ideally, these are done in breakout rooms so that each age group is offered a focused (and exciting) introduction and explanation of their task. A teen assistant, prepped for the task, could meet with one group and the teacher with another.

That said, if the entire educational program meets as a whole and then *k'vutzot* or classes are divided into breakout rooms, it will be impossible for a *k'vutzah* to use the breakout rooms for this "launch." Zoom offers only one layer of breakout rooms.

If you do not have the option of breakout rooms, you may make modifications to how you handle the lesson. For example, consider asking any children working with the upper elementary challenges to take a few minute break while you orient the younger learners to this week's activity box instructions; however, the older children should stay in earshot. Introduce the activity box to the lower elementary age children, then send them off. Call back the older children and launch their learning for the week. Note that this option will increase the launch to 10 minutes time.

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Follow-Up – Whether or not teachers will be scheduling call-in/“Ask Me” times during the week, children should receive work-reminders and additional resources (links to books online with complementary themes, songs, etc.). Parents should be sent or linked to the weekly Family Schmooze, designed for casual conversation around the dinner table, while in the car or any other appropriate time.