

Session 5: What do I now think about *sukkat shalom*?

The focus (“If not now, when?)

Identify key elements of *sukkat shalom* in learners’ lives, with thought given to the vulnerability of a *sukkah* and the resilience of those who pay attention to strengthening it.

Teacher preparation:

Open on your computer:

- The pictures of a *sukkah* that have fallen (*note that all of these are protected by copyright – we could not print them in the curriculum guide*)
 - <https://tinyurl.com/y6s27wdo>
 - <https://tinyurl.com/y6gegkji>
 - <https://tinyurl.com/y2gg5gg9>
 - <https://tinyurl.com/y2uadedu>
- This video: <https://tinyurl.com/yvxxvdoc> (“Building My Sukkah,” by Mayim Bialik)

Prepare two batches of bubbles – one with just a little glycerin and one with enough to keep a bubble from easily popping (see, <https://tinyurl.com/yaz9ocym>).

OPTIONAL: Bring to your computer a few items that are fragile (to illustrate the meaning of the word).

OPTIONAL: Preview to determine whether you wish to show this video of people smashing a “mazel tov cup” at the end of a Jewish wedding: <https://tinyurl.com/y6pxoxz7>. See section 2, below.

FOR LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING:

- Open on your computer (available on the *La-bri’ut* website)
 - Lower Elementary Box Instructions Video
 - Upper Elementary Challenge Video

The session:

1) GREETINGS/CHECK-IN (3 min)

Teacher’s choice

2) REFLECTION/COMMUNITY-BUILDING (7 min)

- a) Spotlight several children and their work from the past week:
 - i) For lower elementary, ask about the Shrinky Dink gifts they made for someone. Share 1-2 pictures and ask children to share what they wrote on their gift; ask any relevant follow up questions.
 - ii) For upper elementary, ask 1-2 children about the safe-space they built. Ask any relevant follow-up questions.

- b) OPTION: Divide children into breakout rooms, each with a teacher and/or *madrich/madrichah*. Give them two minutes to make a list of things that break easily enough – tell them there are bonus points for Jewishly-related things that could break.

On their return, each group gets one point for any general item on their list, but 10 points for anything that has a connection to Judaism that is fragile and breaks (or has broken). Share with the entire cohort only the Jewish items on their lists. Some ideas could be: a glass that is broken at the end of a Jewish wedding, the Ten Commandments that Moses angrily smashed when he saw the golden calf, a *sukkah* ... and more! [If children mention the glass that someone stomps on at the end of a wedding, feel free to show the cued up segment of this video:

<https://tinyurl.com/y6pxoxz7>]

3) NEW CONTENT (15 min)

a) FRAGILITY

- i) Explain that fragile means something that could easily break. Glass and ceramics are fragile, but you happen to have something even more fragile!
- (1) Blow some bubbles with the okay-but-not-strong soap mixture. Ask children to describe what they see? How are these bubbles like the “mazel tov” glass used at a Jewish wedding? Or like a *sukkah* that has fallen down in a storm?
 - (2) Then, blow some bubbles with the mixture that has more glycerin and show their strength. Ask children to describe what they see.
- ii) Explain that our own sense of *sukkat shalom* can be fragile, just as a real *sukkah* can be fragile. But it can also be strong, depending how we build it.

b) THE FRAGILITY OF A SUKKAH:

- i) Ah, a *sukkah* – there are Jews who build one every year and then there are surprises like the four pictures of *sukkot* (plural of *sukkah*) that didn’t make it through the holiday. Share the photos linked in the *Teacher Preparation* section, above.
- (1) What do learners see?
 - (2) What do they wonder about?
 - (3) What do these pictures tell about the strength of a *sukkah*?
 - (4) What might they tell us about *sukkat shalom*?
- ii) Ask if anyone knows the actress, Mayim Bialik (she played Blossom on a tv show called, “Blossom,” and she played the role of Amy in “The Big Bang Theory”).
- (1) Ask children to listen for what Mayim says about a *sukkah* being safe, but not too safe. Share the video, (“Building My Sukkah,” by Mayim Bialik) <https://tinyurl.com/yyvxvocc> up to 1:35 (stop right before the *lulav* is described). If time is short, just show the segment listed in (2) below.
 - (2) Replay :41-:50 where she refers to the fragility of a *sukkah* and says, “It needs to be safe, but not too safe because we are not safe from everything we wish to be safe from.”

c) THE FRAGILITY OF LIFE AND OUR SUKKAT SHALOM

- (1) Ask what are the kinds of things that children might wish to be safe from? Either ask children for their own answers, or do a thumbs up/down (or any other physical actions of your choice) activity where you offer them examples of things they might wish to be safe from. Thumbs up ideas you share, could be:
 - (a) COVID-19
 - (b) Bad weather
 - (c) Cars in the street
 - (d) A nail sticking out of a board that they could scratch themselves on.
 - (2) Ask which PLACES were a *sukkat shalom* for the learners pre-pandemic, but that learners can't visit now or have limited access to. Examples might be:
 - (a) Visiting grandparents
 - (b) Being in school with their full class
 - (c) Playing soccer (or dancing, or other sports that have been cancelled or modified)
 - (3) What could you do to recreate your *sukkat shalom* in other ways? Examples might be:
 - (a) Doing a video chat with a grandparent and baking with him/her, together
 - (b) Schedule a virtual playdate
 - (c) Call friends after schoolwork is done
- d) This week, their activity box and challenge video will ask them to think about their *sukkat shalom*, about strengthening it when it feels fragile and the blessings it can give.

1) LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING (5 min, ideally in breakout rooms)

- e) **Lower elementary** (those with the activity box) – Their activity is to mix the ingredients to make bubbles, noting their fragility but also experimenting with ways to increase their strength using the glycerin. They could hold a strong bubble in their hands if they are wearing cotton gloves. A fragile bubble will pop!
 - i) Reflect with an adult on the fragility of a bubble and the possibility of strengthening it.
 - ii) Parallel this to *sukkat shalom* - by paying attention to ways of attaining safety and protection, we can strengthen it and ourselves.Post to Flipgrid a picture or video of their strengthened bubbles, along with a reflection.
- f) **Upper elementary** (those with the video challenge) – Share the video that introduces the fifth at-home challenge, or ask learners to watch on their own at home. Then, using screen-share, introduce learners to the *Sukkat Shalom* Challenge Card #5.

Make sure they see and understand the challenge of the week: Reflect on your *sukkat shalom* – how it keeps you safe and what steps you might take if it “broke.” Then offer your *sukkat shalom* a personal blessing of peace, safety and protection. Post your results to Flipgrid.

FAMILY SCHMOOZE: A PDF of the card is on the La'bri-ut website.

This is the last week of the *sukkat shalom* module. The children spent some time talking about the fragility of a *sukkah* and the relationship of that to our bigger concept of safety. They saw part of this video with actress Mayim Bialik: "Building My Sukkah," <https://tinyurl.com/yyvxvocc> (for the connection to our theme, see especially :41 - :50)

For this week's schmooze, check out this lovely *sukkat shalom* musing by former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin:

Peace is the beauty of life.
It is sunshine.

It is the smile of a child,
the love of a mother,
the joy of a father,
the togetherness of a family.

It is the advancement of (hu)mans,
the victory of a just cause,
the triumph of truth."

It could be fun to create a family *sukkat shalom* poem that could be posted to your refrigerator, read at bedtime or before a family meal, or any other time that feels right. Consider using the same format as the poem. above:

Sukkat shalom is _____

It is _____

It is _____

the _____

the _____

the _____

It is _____

the _____

the _____

(second side)

Finally, we leave you with this reading that asks of all the images that could be used, why did the author say "a *sukkah* of shalom" instead of "a majestic palace of *shalom*?"

"[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>

FOLLOW-UP DURING THE WEEK

- Immediately after the session send upper elementary children and parents a link to the challenge video so they may watch it again AND send lower elementary parents a link to their box instructions video to share with their child.
- Send a check-in note to parents; include the Family Schmooze page (link is on the *La-bri'ut* website).
- Remind students to share their work on Flipgrid ("I can't wait to see what you post!")
- Respond to children's postings.