

THE HOLIDAY EDITION For grades 6-7



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CANDLE LIGHTING

It's time for Sukkot! There's lots of food and fun, and we eat all our meals in a little hut! But what's it about?

The High Holidays are over. We've spent a lot of time thinking during Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. We've recognized that Hashem created us to be good people - to be the "Best Me" - and we've thought about how we can get to that goal. We've promised ourselves that we will try really hard this coming year.

Now it's time to celebrate! Is there anything better than becoming a better person?

And we have help. Over the High Holidays, we have come to an understanding that Hashem (G-d) is always with us, and will help us in our project of reaching the 'Better Me'. We can feel secure and confident that this year is going to be great!

So, we build ourselves a Sukkah. A Sukkah that has walls on all sides of us. That symbolizes the G-dly protection that envelops us all over.

The Sukkah is not a sturdy or permanent structure. So, sitting in this temporary structure, we are



THE DIALOGUE

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IT'S SUKKOT!



I feel the rush of warm water on my body; its temperature is perfect! The sweet smell of soapy bubbles meets the tip of my nose. The flowing water envelopes me, and then the waterfall ceases. Before the cool air around me even gets a chance to hit my skin, I feel the warmth of a plush towel.

I feel completely enveloped and loved.

Just as my body lets me know that I am hungry, a spoon topped with something pleasing draws closer. My mouth opens. The food slowly travels down the pipes

of my body. I feel sustained and nourished, as my stomach is full and my body growing.

I feel completely enveloped and loved.

The warm days of the summer have passed. Today's weather is cool; autumn is here. I love to be outdoors and breathe in the crisp, fresh air. I'm bundled in a warm jacket, shielding me from the weather we're about to encounter outside.

I feel completely enveloped and loved.

The ride will be bumpy. Click, click - I'm buckled, placed securely into a seat that grasps me in a safe clutch. I feel the cushioned seat surrounding me. I watch the big world pass by. I don't know where we're going, but I feel safe.

I feel completely enveloped and loved.

I'm in an office that's unfamiliar, but I still feel warmed from the inside out by a steady embrace that tells me I shouldn't be scared. I'll never be left alone. And then I feel the cold metal of a stethoscope. But it is accompanied with the warm smile of a person looking down and reassuring me. I am healthy. Smiles all around.

I feel completely enveloped and loved.

reminded of a very important lesson: Hashem is *always* with us and brings us safety. No matter where we are, we are never alone. No matter where we are, Hashem is always watching us.

Just as Hashem gave us protection years ago in the desert (when the Jews left Egypt, they wandered in the desert for 40 years, and they only survived because of Hashem's protection), Hashem will be the 'roof' over our heads.

Hashem won't only help us in our 'project' of reaching the 'Better Me'; Hashem will always be there as we go through life.

Wow, what a joy!

On Sukkot, we also have a special service using four different types of plants – the 'Lulav' (palm branch), 'Etrog' (Citron), the 'Hadas' (myrtle) and the 'Arava' (willow).

We gather these plants together, holding them in our hands, and make a blessing.

Each of these plants represents a different type of personality. So, when you gather them together, it's like having four different types of people, some very nice and smart and some very simple.

This teaches us the need for togetherness. No matter what our talents, we are one people.

After the High Holiday's lessons, and understanding about how Hashem created us all, and how we each have a 'Best Me' to become, we are ready for this special lesson of Sukkot.



Ah, the warm embrace of strong, soft arms. My head is stroked soothingly, lovingly. Each person who gently picks me up, coos, smiles, tickles, strokes, holds me close.

And in their embrace I feel
Enveloped.
Encircled.

Completely. Entirely. Absolutely. Wholly.

Surrounded with love and protection.

I feel completely enveloped and loved.



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THE DIALOGUE

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

◆ In the Torah, we are told that Hashem's love for us is like the deep love a parent feels for his/her child. The Sukkot holiday teaches us that Hashem's love surrounds us like the walls of a Sukkah. Is this awareness always easy to access? What can we do to help ourselves access this awareness even more strongly? How does having this awareness of Hashem's love for us help us in our day to day lives?

◆ A special Sukkot mitzvah is to gather "4 Plants" and make a blessing over the group. This symbolic act teaches us the importance of unity. Why is unity so important? What can we do to inspire within ourselves a sense of unity towards all people, especially with those who are different?

◆ Sukkot is also called "Holiday of Ingathering of Crops"; it is an agricultural holiday that celebrates the culmination of the planting cycle (the time we collect the plants to eat through winter). How might a farmer feel the Hand of Hashem in his work? How can we find the Hand of Hashem in our lives?