

Bnei Akiva Svivot 5780: Choveret Chinuchit

To our wonderful Roshim, Sganim and Madrichim,

The moment you've all been waiting for is finally here...Sviva is beginning and soon you'll be trooping from sukkah to sukkah, enjoying the fresh air and food (and hopefully the weather)! Generous families from your local area have kindly offered to host hordes of hungry children for the afternoon. This is a fantastic way to frame the year, experiencing what it means to be a community.

The idea of welcoming complete strangers into your sukkah and giving them food seems a little strange. But as we will see in this choveret, Sukkot is a time when we particularly focus on the mitzvah of Hachnasat Orchim, welcoming guests.

Sviva is a hotbed of potential. Every chanich you encounter, from the smallest first-timer who is too shy to speak, to the teenage boy bouncing off the walls after eating all the sweets, could be a future madrich, Rosh or even a member of the Mazkirut! The environment that you create and the example that you set could turn two hours on Shabbat afternoon into a lifetime shaped by Bnei Akiva's values and community spirit. The power is in your hands!

If you have any suggestions for changes to the choveret, if you require any support in with anything, or if you just want to chat about how things are going please don't hesitate to be in touch! Zoe can be contacted at svivot@bauk.org or 0208 209 1319 ext. 4, and Chana can be contacted at chinuch@bauk.org or 0208 209 1319 ext. 5. Wishing you all hatzlacha raba and looking forward to hearing great things!

Chag sameach!

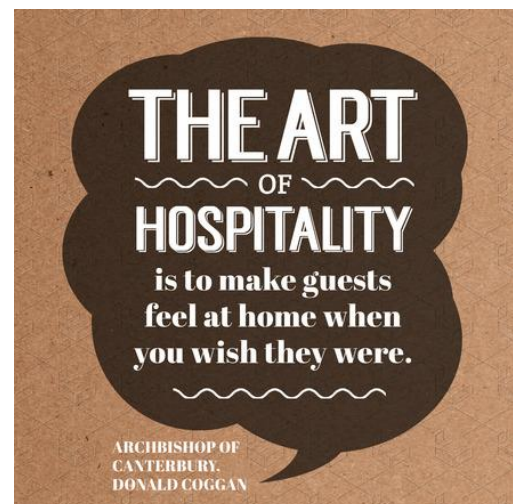
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WEEK 1: Hachnasat Orchim (welcoming guests) in the Sukkah

Avraham Avinu, the icon of hospitality

Parashat Vayera, which we will read on Shabbat in a few weeks' time, opens with Avraham seated at the entrance of his tent in the plains of Mamre. He's just recovering from his Brit Mila at the ripe old age of 99, and the day is getting hot. Yet, when he notices three men approaching, he jumps up, runs towards them and bows low to the ground. He begs them to rest for a while and offers them food and water, which they agree to. The feast which he and Sara then prepare for them is magnificent. When it emerges that the three men are in fact angels, Avraham's hospitality continues. He even goes as far as walking with them for the first part of the journey to see them on their way.

Few of us can rival Avraham's incredible Mesirat Nefesh (self-sacrifice) when given the opportunity to host guests at



a time when he should have been more than entitled to stay in bed all day. Even so, there is a lot we can learn from Avraham about the importance of hospitality.

In Gemara Shabbat 127a we are taught that welcoming guests is greater than welcoming the presence of the Shechinah (God). How crucial is this mitzvah, that it is even more important than welcoming God into our homes!

Special guests· the Ushpizin

The mitzvah of Hachnasat Orchim has particular significance on the Chagim. On Sukkot we invite the seven Ushpizin, symbolic guests, into our Sukkah. One of these guests is singled out each night with a specific invitation read in Aramaic. Some people even leave an empty chair for this visitor. It may not surprise you to learn that the first 'guest' is Avraham Avinu! The following guests are Yitzchak, Yaakov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon and David. (In recent times, some people also invite 'Ushpizot', female guests: Sara, Rivka, Rachel, Leah, Miriam, Avigail, and Esther.)

So why are these men all chosen as our guests? And why do we invite guests into the Sukkah in the first place?

On the Chagim, we are commanded to rejoice by a pasuk in Sefer Devarim:



"You shall rejoice in your festival, with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your communities." (Devarim 16:14)

The mitzvah of simcha (joy) is dependent on sharing our happiness with those most in need. On Sukkot we move out of our homes and into temporary dwellings that remind us of what it means not to have a home. The Ushpizin act as a further reminder, each representing up-rootedness:

- Avraham left his father's home for the land God promised to show him (Bereishit 12:1)
- Yitzchak went to Gerar during a famine (Bereishit 26:1)
- Yaakov fled from his brother Esav to the home of Lavan (Bereishit 28:2)
- Yosef was sold to merchants and taken to Egypt (Bereishit 37:23-26)
- Moshe fled to Midian after inadvertently killing an Egyptian (Shemot 2:11-15)
- Aharon (and Moshe) wandered in the desert for forty years (beginning with Shemot 13)
- David hid from Shaul in the wilderness (Shmuel Aleph 20,21)

Sukkot is an opportunity to really focus on the mitzvah of hospitality and learning about the Ushpizin can help to develop this on a deeper level. We won't go into further detail here but it's well worth looking up more information on these characters!

Our obligations as guests

The Gemara in Brachot 58a states as follows:

"Ben Zoma used to say, "What does a good guest say?" "How much trouble my host goes through for me? How much meat he has offered? How much wine he has set before me? How many cakes he has brought before me? And all of this trouble he went through for me." But an inconsiderate guest, what does he say?" "What trouble has my host gone through? I have eaten one piece of bread and a single piece of meat. I have had but one cup of wine. All the trouble the host has gone to has been only for his family." "

Ben Zoma is teaching us the important principle of Hakarat Hatov (recognising the good). It is essential that we acknowledge the effort that our hosts have gone to and are grateful for their hospitality.



There are certain ways that it is important to behave in the Sukkah. Not only are you entering someone's private space, but you are representing Bnei Akiva for the whole time which you are there. Make sure your chanichim treat every sukkah with respect and don't touch the decorations (not least because they are muktzeh!) and encourage them to thank your hosts as you leave. See below for some important halachot regarding the Sukkah crawl. Try to familiarise yourselves with these before you go – your chanichim will see the Dugma (example) that you set them and will follow suit!

SPECIAL HALACHOT FOR THE SUKKAH CRAWL

1. Remember to make brachot on all food being eaten.
2. Try and make the brachot in the correct order: **Hamotzi, Mezonot, Hagefen, Ha'etz (7 fruits of Israel before others), Ha'adama, Shehakol.**
3. After making the bracha on the food (preferably mezonot) make the bracha of **"Leishev B'sukkah."** Then try to sit down and eat the food.
4. After all the eating is done remember to say a bracha acharona, which is **Al Hamichyah** if at least a k'zayit (olive-sized piece) of Mezonot is eaten. Remember to add "vesamcheinu beyom chag hasukkot hazeh".
5. For all other foods the bracha acharona is **"Borei Nefashot"**.
6. There is no obligation to sit and to eat in the Sukkah if it is raining.

Questions to ponder

- Why do you think Hachnasat Orchim (welcoming guests) is so important as a Jew?
- What behaviour can we learn from Avraham about how to fulfil the mitzvah properly?
- What could it mean that "welcoming guests is greater than welcoming the presence of the Shechinah (God)"?
- In what other ways do the seven Ushpizin relate to the chag of Sukkot?

Peula Ideas for Younger Years

Games to do hospitality

- Headbandz with the Ushpizin as the characters
- I am sitting on a chair (empty chair)

Games to do with Sukkot/festivals

- Fruit basket
- Teaching Sukkot songs
- I went to the sukkah and brought...

Peula Ideas for Older Years

Games to do with hospitality

- Hosts – each person thinks of one person/character that they want to invite to a dinner party. They all tell their character to the 'host' (someone with a good memory!) who then lists the 'guests' in a random order. Everyone has to guess who chose which guest.
- Improv – seven people each act as one of the seven Ushpizin. You give them a setting (e.g. at the Shabbat table, underwater, in a school exam) and a style (e.g. musical, comedy, murder mystery, quiz show). They need to act out a scene in the style and setting that you gave them while remaining in character. Freeze and switch out the actors between each scene, and get suggestions of settings and styles from the audience.

Games to do with Sukkot/festivals

- The group forms a circle with one person in the middle. An object passed around the circle. At any time the person chooses s/he shouts a letter of the alphabet. The person holding the object when the letter is called out must respond by calling out, as quickly as possible, one item, name or place related to Sukkot that begins with that letter. That person can be asked to explain the connection between the item and the chag. If the person holding the object is successful in the allotted time period, s/he changes place with the person in the middle.
- Pass the etrog - chanichim are seated in a circle. Two 'Etrogim' (you can use lemons) are passed round separately. They may be passed in different directions, but they must be PASSED to each person, and NOT THROWN. The aim is to avoid being caught with both etrogim, and to try to land somebody else with them. If this happens, the person caught is out, and either folds their arms or sits back from the circle.

Discussions

- Who do you think the seven 'guests' that Bnei Akiva might choose to invite into the sukkah would be and why?
- We have seen that guests are required to behave a certain way – is a host still obligated to treat their guests kindly if they are not acting properly?

Top tips for Sukkah crawls

- Plan out your route in advance. This will help you be strategic with planning triggers and discussions to run en route. You could even set up a scavenger hunt on the way!
- Keep your chanichim safe and don't let them walk alone in the streets
- Have fun!