



Thanks a Lot!

Topic

Sukkot, Thanksgiving

Grade Level(s)

Primary, Intermediate

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will

- Reflect on the similarities between Sukkot and Thanksgiving
- Think about how seasons affect our celebrations

Materials needed

You might choose to bring some seasonal foods for students to see, touch, smell, and taste. (Remember to check for allergies first!) Suggestions include:

- Squash
- Corn
- Pumpkin

Background for Teachers

Both Sukkot and Thanksgiving celebrate the harvest. Historically, Sukkot falls at the end of the harvest season, when *B'nei Yisrael* (the Israelites) would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the bountiful crops that God provided them. In a similar vein, although modern scholarship finds a long history of thanksgiving feasts in the English-speaking world, traditionally modern Thanksgiving recalls the "First Thanksgiving," when the Pilgrims of Plymouth celebrated a bountiful harvest that would help them to get through the upcoming winter months.

Description of Activities

1. If you chose to bring in season foods, take the opportunity to let students see, touch, smell, and taste the foods.
2. Ask students what the foods have in common.
 - a. Lead the discussion to end with the idea that they are traditionally fall foods.
3. Discuss with students:
 - a. The harvest season comes during the fall.
 - b. The primary occupation of *B'nei Yisrael* was agriculture/farming.
4. Ask older students to compare and contrast agricultural and industrial societies.
5. Do a harvest visualization with students:
 - a. Students close their eyes.



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- b. Students picture themselves as farmers who have been working the fields over the year.
 - i. You might choose to place them in a particular time period:
 1. Ancient Israel
 2. 17th-century Plymouth
 3. 21st-century Iowa
 - ii. You also might choose to have students stand up and act out:
 1. Tilling the soil
 2. Planting seeds
 3. Picking crops
 4. Harvesting crops
- c. Students begin to see a bountiful harvest.
- d. Ask students how they feel now that they have seen the fruits of their labor.
 - i. Why do they feel this way?
 - ii. For what do they feel thankful?
 - iii. To whom do they feel thankful?
- e. Ask: Is there something similar to the harvest in your own life?
6. Point out the harvest connection between Sukkot and Thanksgiving.
7. Ask students to brainstorm some ideas about what they do on each holiday. These ideas could include foods they eat and what they do to prepare for the holidays.
8. Explain to students that they will compare Sukkot and Thanksgiving.
9. Hand out the Venn Diagram sheets.
10. Students fill in the Venn Diagram.
11. Encourage students to take home the sheets to spark discussion on Thanksgiving.

Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

For learners who need more assistance

- Provide a list of key words to help spark ideas of what is special about Sukkot and/or Thanksgiving.
- Fill in the Venn Diagram as a group.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- Ask students to write the “The Sukkot and Thanksgiving Mashup” song.
- Ask students to create a Thanksgiving menu for American *olim* (people who made *aliyah*). You can show them [this video](#).