



U'shavtem Mayim B'sason: Sukkot & the Gift of Water

The objective of this session is to help grade school children understand:

- The connection between *Sukkot* and water and that water is a gift from Hashem
- The importance of water in our lives and our responsibility to help conserve water

Materials:

- Foods or objects that relate to water or plants like Swedish fish, fruits and vegetables, fruit flavored/shaped candy, paper, wood carvings, etc.

Facilitator Notes:

- The following activities each have suggested time limits, but understand that this is flexible depending on the group. You may choose to extend one activity or a piece of one activity and shorten another. If the children have ideas of their own that are pertinent to the topic, feel free to let them guide the conversation. As long as they walk away with the understandings listed above, it's okay to skip or adapt.
- If your children are younger (PreK-1):
 - You may want to spend longer on the movement activity than the debrief section.
 - It may be advisable to share information in the debrief section, rather than ask the questions, to facilitate the discussion. If you decide to use the questions as prompts, you will most likely need to use the detailed prompts in italics as well.
 - Try to make the questions in the debrief section interactive (e.g. ask a child to point to or hold up the object to which they are referring).
- If you have a wide age range:
 - In the debrief section, you may choose to call on children specifically and ask a question, rather than asking the group as a whole. This way, you avoid younger children feeling intimidated by older children in the group.

Movement Activity (6-7 minutes)

Goal: To help kids think about how water impacts them in everyday life.

- Have the children stand up and make sure they have a little room to move around. Explain they are going to do an activity that will require them to act things out.
- Following are a variety of prompts for this movement activity. For each prompt, let the children act it out for a few seconds and then ask them to "freeze," then call on one or two people and have them describe their pose. You can repeat this multiple times for each prompt and use as many prompts as time allows. (**Note:** *You may have to help some children describe by offering a prompt or observation about their pose such as "You look like you are ____...")*
 - Imagine it's really hot outside; the sun is shining down and you've been playing outside for the whole afternoon. How do you feel?

- *If someone has trouble acting this out, offer a more detailed prompt like: "Would you be tired? Thirsty? What would it look like?"*
- Mime something you can do with water.
 - *If someone has trouble acting this out, offer a more detailed prompt like: "Can you go swimming in water?" "Can you water the grass?" or "Can you splash in puddles after it rains?"*
- Imagine you are a tree or a flower. How would you look if you are very thirsty?
 - *If someone has trouble acting this out, offer a more detailed prompt like: "Would a flower be standing tall and straight, or wilting and bending over?"*
- On Sukkot, we celebrate Hashem giving us water. How would you look if you were celebrating or very happy?
 - *If someone has trouble acting this out, offer a more detailed prompt like: "Would you dance at a celebration? Would you have a big smile?"*

Debrief (6-7 minutes)

Goal: To help children understand the connection between water and Sukkot, to emphasize the preciousness of water, and to discuss ways to conserve and protect water.

- **Ask:** Why is water so important?
 - *If nobody shares, offer a prompt like: "Can we live without water?" or "Can plants and trees live without water?"*
- **Ask:** Is water something we will always have? Is it possible to run out of clean water?
 - **Note:** *This might take some explanation about clean water, how only a small percentage of water on Earth is fresh water (as opposed to salt water), and that it is expensive to treat water to clean it.*
- **Ask:** If we ran out of clean water, what would we lose? Can you think of something, or is there something you see on the table we wouldn't have without water?
 - *If nobody shares, offer a prompt like: "Plants and trees would die without water; if that happened, what things from trees do we eat or use every day that we wouldn't have anymore?"*
- **Share:** In the times of the *beit hamikdash* (temple), there was a great celebration on Sukkot called a *simchat beit hashoeva*. In a grand ceremony, water would be poured from a golden pitcher in silver bowls, and the Jewish people would spend the nights of Sukkot dancing, singing and celebrating. The Jewish people recognized that water was a precious gift from Hashem, and they used it for the greatest and most joyous celebration of the year. We no longer have the *beit hamikdash*, but during Sukkot, we still have this celebration with water because we have never forgotten how important this gift of water is.
 - **Note:** *Feel free to be "over the top" when you describe this—you want to give the impression that it was grandiose. You can also have the children act out a simchat beit hashoeva as you are sharing the information. For example, have someone mime pouring water from a pitcher into bowls while everyone else dances around. If you like and you think the children know it, sing "u'shavtem mayim b'sason."*
 - **If time allows:** *Share that at the end of Sukkot, we say tefilat geshem, a special tefilah (prayer) to Hashem to give us good rain so that our wheat will grow tall in the*

fields and the oranges will grow big and juicy in the groves, and not bad rain like hurricanes that destroy.

- **Share:** As Jews, it is our responsibility to take care of the precious water that Hashem gives to us. It is especially important because pollution and wasting of water is harmful to Israel—a lot of water in Israel is contaminated, which means it is dangerous to drink because you could get sick. During the year, it's important for us to think about conserving (not wasting) water, and making sure we help keep water clean. What are some ways we can do that?
 - *Don't let the water run while you are brushing your teeth, wash dishes in a basin instead of letting the water run, use a watering can instead of a hose to water plants, take a shorter shower, don't throw trash on the ground because it can end up in the water, recycle so trash does not end up in the ocean, etc.*

Thanks to Rella Kaplowitz for creating this activity.