

# **HOLIDAY ENHANCEMENT GUIDE**

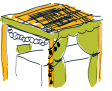
## **SUKKOT**

## Created by Honeycomb

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# INTRODUCTION

## Why Holidays?

In order to develop a culture of life-long giving, it is important to find ways to weave philanthropy into rituals and traditions that young people will continue participating in long after they graduate from high school. Creating opportunities that connect learnings from Jewish youth philanthropy with holiday practices and traditions promotes a deeper understanding of the values that permeate these programs and encourages teen participants to be future leaders.

## Why Sukkot?

Sukkot is a festival that is chock full of themes that connect seamlessly with Jewish youth philanthropy. While sometimes overshadowed by Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Sukkot offers an opportunity to explore nature and the changing seasons, to cook and eat symbolic foods like stuffed vegetables of all kinds, and to consider the impact of our ancestors. Plus, Sukkot has meaningful symbols, like the lulav and etrog, which can be integrated into whole body prayer experiences throughout the weeklong celebration.

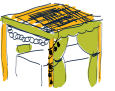
## How to Use This Guide

This guide offers two different approaches to Sukkot and Jewish youth philanthropy.

The first section includes resources for enhancing your ongoing philanthropy program with the values, themes, and traditions of the holiday. We have provided text studies and activities that will pair perfectly with the curriculum you are using. The resources that we have provided here can also be used as a stand-alone program for participants to have initial exposure to Jewish youth philanthropy through the lens of Sukkot, and can act as an excellent tool for program recruitment.

The second section of this guide presents ways to partner with your community, offering ways for a larger audience to gain insight into grantmaking opportunities through their holiday experiences. This section shares opportunities for participants in your program to stretch their leadership skills in the wider community and to think strategically about how best to position philanthropy in relation to the holiday.





## Sukkot Themes

### Harvest



Sukkot is a holiday that goes by many names. One of them, *hag ha-asif* in Hebrew, means “The Harvest Festival”. As is often the case in Jewish tradition, where holidays encompass multiple themes and have grown out of a combination of ancient practices that predate the Israelites, Sukkot finds its roots partially in an early fall harvest celebration. Elements of being grateful for the harvest are woven throughout the liturgy and practices of Sukkot. Over time, connections to events like the Israelites wandering in the desert and a connection to another harvest festival, Shavuot, were layered atop what was already observed. This evolution created what we now recognize as a modern version of Sukkot.

### Building Perspective



The most distinct image of Sukkot is the building of and dwelling in *sukkot*, Hebrew for “huts”, for the week of the festival. These temporary shelters come in all shapes and sizes but follow a certain set of rules regarding being open to the sky above and open for guests to gather.

The physical act of building is mirrored in the metaphorical. While spending time in these humble dwellings, we have the opportunity to reflect and gain perspective. Rashi writes that a sukkah is meant to teach one “to remember his evil days in his day of prosperity. He will thereby be induced to thank G-d repeatedly and to lead a modest and humble life.” (Guide to the Perplexed, 3:43)

### Impermanence



A unique element of Sukkot is the focus on the ephemeral. While many other Jewish traditions and observances have a more solid feel to them, Sukkot emphasizes the fragility of life. From the temporary huts that are built knowing that they could blow over in a heavy wind to the shaking of the lulav in all directions, there is a constant reminder built into Sukkot that nothing lasts forever.

The imperative to avoid a solid roof in the sukkah is representative of a type of transparency; that while we may dwell “inside”, the sky above and the stars are visible, that the inside permeates the outside and vice versa.



# INCLUDING SUKKOT IN YOUR JEWISH YOUTH PHILANTHROPY PROGRAM

Bring the values, themes, and traditions of the holiday into your already-existing program.

## ACTIVITY 1

### THEME: HARVEST

#### What is it?

A 25-minute text study that makes the connection between the theme of “harvest” and other elements of Jewish youth philanthropy.

#### When can you use this activity?

This activity can be added to your lesson plan for a session during (or right before) Sukkot. Slot it in after an opening activity. Use it as a closing activity. Invite parents/families to join at the beginning or end of the session to do this activity together.

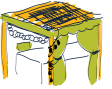
#### What resources do you need?

Harvest Text study sheets (Appendix I, pages 15-18).

#### Instructions:

1. Share the text study sheets with the participants. Invite participants to read aloud the texts provided. You can give this background for each of the texts:
  - **Leviticus 23:39-43:** This passage describes the Sukkot festival and its connection to the harvest season.
  - **Deuteronomy 8:10-18:** This passage emphasizes the importance of gratitude for G-d's blessings and the responsibility to share with others.
  - **Pirkei Avot 5:13:** This Mishnah teaches that giving is a *mitzvah* (commandment) and that one should give generously and cheerfully.
  - **Maimonides' Laws of Charity 8:1-2:** This passage outlines Maimonides' eight levels of charity, emphasizing the importance of giving to those in need.
2. In *chevruta* (study groups of 2 or 3 participants) discuss the first set of questions.
3. Come back together in a large group and ask each smaller group to share any common themes that arose from their discussions.
4. Discuss the second set of questions.





## ACTIVITY 2

### THEME: *BUILDING PERSPECTIVE*

#### What is it?

An opportunity to get outside and explore the environment where your program takes place. Through observation of your surroundings, participants will be able to “build perspective” around their community and assess needs and values.

#### When can you use this activity?

When beginning to learn about the values that guide your work for the year. When your group delves into the justice issues in the curriculum.

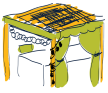
#### What resources do you need?

Paper for drawing, pencils, different sukkot images (can be found in the [slide deck](#) or Appendix II, pages 19-30), [7 Core Values of Philanthropy one-pager](#), [Justice Issues one-pager](#)

#### Instructions:



1. Before the participants enter the room, display the provided slides of several types of sukkot (you can also be print these and display in the room).
2. Ask the participants:
  - What do these structures have in common?
  - What is unique about each of them?
3. Distribute drawing paper and pencils to all participants.
4. Tell the participants: *“We are taking a walking field trip today. Your instructions are to notice all the distinct types of structures that you see and to depict them using your paper and pencil.”* (they could also take pictures with their phones).
5. When you come back together, ask the participants:
  - What did you notice about the structures we saw on our walk?
  - What types of structures did you see? (Houses, apartment buildings, stores, medical offices, natural structures)
  - How are they similar to or different from the sukkot images that we looked at to start our session?
6. Share the “7 Core Values of Philanthropy” one-pager and the “Justice Issues” one-pager (either printed or as a slide). Ask for participants to read them aloud for the group.

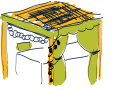


## Instructions continued...

7. Say to participants: *“Our environment cannot help but inform our values. Places that have beaches tend to have more people who are enthusiastic about swimming, surfing, and boating. Places that have land full of farms will have people deeply invested in food and agriculture.”*
8. Ask the participants:
  - What did you notice about our environment on our field trip?
  - Can you connect any of these values or justice issues to the structures that we have been looking at today?
9. Say to the participants:  
*“When the time comes to dig into which Justice Issues, we want to fund this year, we’ll come back to what we’ve observed today to help inform our choices.”*







## ACTIVITY 3

### THEME: IMPERMANENCE

#### What is it?

An arts and crafts exploration that helps us to understand the ideas around impermanence and its connection to both the festival of Sukkot and philanthropy.

#### When can you use this activity?

At the beginning of a session together leading up to or during Sukkot. As an activity to invite families to participate in with their teens at drop off or pick up times.

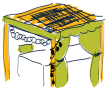
#### What resources do you need?

Paper or cardboard, drawing materials (paint, markers, or colored pencils), natural materials (leaves, twigs, flowers), glue, scissors, string or ribbon.

#### Instructions:

1. Have each participant design and create a miniature Sukkah using the provided materials. They can incorporate elements that symbolize nature, such as leaves, flowers, or fragile materials. Encourage them to think about the idea of building something beautiful and meaningful, even if it is temporary.
2. Once the sukkot are completed, lead a conversation using the following discussion questions:
  - How does the impermanence of the sukkah relate to the impermanence of life?
  - How can we find meaning and purpose in a world that is constantly changing?
  - How can the idea of impermanence inspire us to live more fully and appreciate the present moment?
  - What are elements of your lives that feel permanent? Are these positive aspects or negative aspects?
  - Do we have the power to change things that feel permanently negative in the lives of others? How?
  - Do we have the power to introduce positive permanence in the lives of others? How?
  - How does funding projects in need of support create a new type of permanence in non-profit organizations?
  - What type of giving feels more permanent and what feels more like it might disappear?





# INCLUDING PHILANTHROPY IN YOUR SUKKOT CELEBRATIONS

Bring the benefits of participating in philanthropy to a wider audience through a holiday experience.

## ACTIVITY 4 THEME: HARVEST

### What is it?

“Harvesting Hope” Put together a program that you can offer during Sukkot for local Jewish organizations that makes the connection between “harvest” and opportunities to fund programs that do work in that area.

### Details

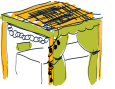
Research local organizations that are doing work around the theme of “harvest,” however you understand that. For example, organizations that are gathering food that would otherwise go to waste, organizations that are working directly with farms to collect for those in need. This can go beyond the idea of harvesting just food to thinking about other essential items that others may need like clothing, home goods, etc. Send a letter to the professionals at those organizations inviting them to speak on panel about their work and how the community can be more involved. Reach out to local Jewish organizations (including the one where your program is hosted!) to see if they would like to host this panel presentation. Set a date and time within the week preceding Sukkot, during Sukkot, or just after Sukkot (while the Sukkah is up!). Invite the community.



### Suggestions for the Program

#### Introduction:

- Give a brief overview of the Sukkot holiday and its connection to the harvest season. (or ask a rabbi or educator to present on this topic)
- Discuss the concept of "harvest" in a broader sense, including spiritual and emotional harvests. (or ask a rabbi or educator to present on this topic)



## Instructions continued...



### Panel Discussion:

- Invite the representatives from local charitable organizations that focus on food security, sustainability, or community development to discuss their work and how it aligns with the theme of "harvest."
- Explore the impact of their programs on individuals and communities.

### Optional Interactive Activity:

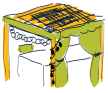
- Organize a hands-on activity related to food production or sustainability, such as planting seeds or creating a community garden.
- Discuss the importance of supporting local food systems and sustainable practices.

### Fundraising Opportunities:

- Present information about the charitable organizations featured in the panel discussion.
- Highlight specific fundraising campaigns or donation opportunities.
- Encourage participants to contribute to these organizations and support their mission.

### Closing:

- Summarize the key points of the program.
- Emphasize the importance of giving back and the positive impact that philanthropy can have on individuals and communities.



## ACTIVITY 5

### THEME: *BUILDING PERSPECTIVE*

#### What is it?

A program that Youth Philanthropy students will create and offer to Jewish schools/religious school programs for 6th or 7th grade students. It brings together the themes of “building perspective” and Sukkot and introduces some elements of philanthropy.

#### What resources do you need?

Items that help to shift perspective, like kaleidoscopes, sunglasses/tinted glasses, binoculars, etc.

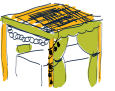
#### Ahead of time...

- Reach out to area synagogues and Jewish schools to ask about your youth philanthropy participants coming in during Sukkot to present to a group of younger students (6th or 7th grade) about Sukkot and Jewish youth philanthropy.
- Ask if the organization has a sukkah, and if so, ask if you can lead the session in the sukkah.

#### Instructions:

1. Philanthropy participants introduce themselves and explain that they are here to run a small activity with the group.
2. Pass around items that help to shift perspective, like kaleidoscopes, sunglasses/tinted glasses, binoculars, etc. Allow time for the younger students to examine and experiment with the objects.
3. Ask the younger students the follow questions:
  - What looked different when using these items?”
  - What other things make a difference in the way you look at or experience things?”
  - How are some of our other senses shifted?” (Ear plugs, holding your nose, a scented candle burning, wearing gloves when touching something).
4. Say to younger students:  
*“When we use these items to look at things or experience moments, we are working to BUILD a different PERSPECTIVE. We are learning to experience things in different ways.”*





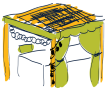
## Instructions continued...

7. Ask the younger students the follow questions:
  - Why might it be important to build multiple perspectives?"
  - Did any of you help to build a sukkah this year? Have any of you been in a sukkah this year? (you do not need to ask this if you're leading this program IN the sukkah) (If nobody answers yes to either of these questions, show pictures of sukkot to the group so they're on the same page about what one might look like.)
  - What are some of the differences between a sukkah and a more permanent structure?"
  - Are there things you might not know about a sukkah if you only looked at it from the outside?"

8. Say to the younger students:

*"It is hard to know what's going on inside a building, inside a team, inside a family, or even inside someone else's mind. But when we take time to look at things from multiple angles, we can get a better understanding. The holiday of Sukkot helps us with that. It forces us to experience things differently. The program that we are involved in this year is focused on Jewish youth philanthropy. A valuable tool in figuring out what issues may need funding is learning how people in a community may experience dissimilar needs and how giving can help address those needs. To do so, we often need to shift perspective and see things differently."*





## ACTIVITY 6

### THEME: IMPERMANENCE

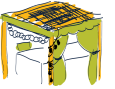
#### What is it?

An art project that can be set up while the sukkah is being taken down to explore the idea of impermanence and how it connects to philanthropy and Sukkot.

#### Program Ideas

- Check in with your host organization and other area Jewish organizations to ask when they are taking their sukkah down. Ask if you can set up a table there to offer an activity during that time.
- Create a poster board display that clearly shows who you are and what you are doing.
- Create a webpage/Facebook post/Instagram post, etc. that shares ways to give to organizations in your community. Create a QR code that links to that site or post.
- Make index cards that say something like “Sukkot is temporary, but philanthropy can last” or “Just like sukot, these art projects are temporary. Acts of giving can last forever.” And “Learn more by scanning this QR code.”
- Gather materials to create temporary art, like sand that can blow away, chalk that can be washed away when it rains, or natural materials that can be placed together to create images/structures, but then could easily be knocked over.
- Set up your table with materials and information.
- Invite passersby to join you in creating.
- Give them one of your index cards when they leave.
- Even if people do not stop to create something, still hand out the cards to those who stop by.





# HANDOUTS AND TEMPLATES

## APPENDIX I - HARVEST TEXT STUDY

### Text 1: Leviticus 23:39-43

(39) On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of [to last] seven days: a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. (40) On the first day you shall take the product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before your G-d seven days. (41) You shall observe it as a festival of G-d for seven days in the year; you shall observe it in the seventh month as a law for all time, throughout the ages. (42) You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, (43) in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt—I am your G-d.

(לט) אָךְ בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשׂוֹר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ  
הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַסְפְּכֶם אֶת־תְּבוּאת הָאָרֶץ  
תַּחֲגוּ אֶת־חַג־אֲדֹנָי שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּיּוֹם  
הָרִאשׁוֹן שַׁבָּתוֹן וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי  
שַׁבָּתוֹן: (מ) וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם  
הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרֵי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפַּת תְּמָרִים  
וְעֵנָף עֵץ־עֵבֶת וְעַרְבֵי־נַחַל וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם  
לִפְנֵי אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים:  
(מא) וַחֲגַתֶּם אֹתוֹ חַג לְאֲדֹנָי שִׁבְעַת  
יָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם  
בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי תַּחֲגוּ אֹתוֹ: (מב)  
בַּסֶּכֶת תֵּשְׁבוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל־הָאֲזָרוּחַ  
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשְׁבוּ בַּסֶּכֶת: (מג) לְמַעַן יִדְעוּ  
דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בַּסֶּכֶת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת־בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם  
אֲנִי אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

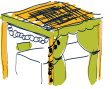


**Text 2: Deuteronomy 8:10-18**

(10) When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to your G-d for the good land given to you. (11) Take care lest you forget your G-d and fail to keep the divine commandments, rules, and laws which I enjoin upon you today. (12) When you have eaten your fill, and have built fine houses to live in, (13) and your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold have increased, and everything you own has prospered, (14) beware lest your heart grow haughty and you forget your G-d—who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage; (15) who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its seraph, serpents and scorpions, a parched land with no water in it, who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock; (16) who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your ancestors had never known, in order to test you by hardships only to benefit you in the end— (17) and you say to yourselves, “My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me.” (18) Remember that it is your G-d who gives you the power to get wealth, in fulfillment of the covenant made on oath with your fathers, as is still the case.

(י) וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־אֲדֹנָי  
 אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ:  
 (יא) הִשָּׁמֵר לְךָ פֶּן־תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת־אֲדֹנָי  
 אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְבַלְתִּי שָׁמֵר מִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו  
 וְחֻקֹּתָיו אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם: (יב)  
 פֶּן־תִּבְנֶה וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבָתִּים טֹבִים תִּבְנֶה  
 וְיִשְׁבַּת: (יג) וּבִקְרָה וּצְאָנְךָ יִרְבּוּ וְכֶסֶף  
 וְזָהָב יִרְבֶּה־לְךָ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־לְךָ יִרְבֶּה:  
 (יד) וְרַם לְבַבְךָ וְשָׁכַחְתָּ אֶת־אֲדֹנָי  
 אֱלֹהֶיךָ הַמוֹצִיאֲךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית  
 עֲבָדִים: (טו) הַמּוֹלִיכְךָ בַּמִּדְבָּר | הַגְּדֹל  
 וְהַנּוֹרָא נַחֵשׁ | שָׂרָף וְעִקָּרָב וְצִמְאוֹן  
 אֲשֶׁר אֵין־מַיִם הַמוֹצִיא לְךָ מֵמַיִם מִצּוֹר  
 הַחֲלֹמִישׁ: (טז) הַמֵּאֲכִילֶךָ מִן בַּמִּדְבָּר  
 אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּן אֲבֹתֶיךָ לְמַעַן עֲנֹתְךָ  
 וּלְמַעַן נִסְתָּךָ לְהִיטִיבָהּ בְּאַחֲרִיתֶךָ: (יז)  
 וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְבְּךָ כַּחַל וְעַצְמִי יָדִי עָשָׂה לִי  
 אֶת־הַחֵיל הַזֶּה: (יח) וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת־אֲדֹנָי  
 אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הֵנִיתָ לְךָ כֹּחַ לַעֲשׂוֹת  
 חֵיל לְמַעַן הִקִּים אֶת־בְּרִיתוֹ  
 אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם כִּי־וְהָיָה הַזֶּה: {פ}





### Text 3: Pirkei Avot 5:13

(13) There are four types of charity givers. He who wishes to give, but that others should not give: his eye is evil to that which belongs to others; He who wishes that others should give, but that he himself should not give: his eye is evil towards that which is his own; He who desires that he himself should give, and that others should give: he is a pious man; He who desires that he himself should not give and that others too should not give: he is a wicked man.

(יג) אַרְבַּע מְדוּת בְּנוֹתַי צְדָקָה.  
הַרוֹצֵה שְׂשִׁיתָן וְלֹא יִתְּנוּ אַחֲרָיִם, עֵינֹו  
רָעָה בְּשָׁל אַחֲרָיִם. יִתְּנוּ אַחֲרָיִם וְהוּא  
לֹא יִתֵּן, עֵינֹו רָעָה בְּשָׁלוֹ. יִתֵּן וְיִתְּנוּ  
אַחֲרָיִם, חֲסִיד. לֹא יִתֵּן וְלֹא יִתְּנוּ  
אַחֲרָיִם, רָשָׁע:

### Text 4: Maimonides Ladder of Giving

The Jewish ideals of Tzedakah were summarized and taught by Moses Maimonides (RaMBaM), a great teacher who lived in Spain and Egypt. Maimonides believed that Tzedakah is like a ladder. It has eight rungs, from bottom to top.

#### HIGHEST LEVEL OF GIVING



- The person who helps another to become self-supporting by a gift or a loan or by finding employment for the recipient.
- The person who gives without knowing to whom he or she gives.
- The recipient does not know from whom he or she receives.
- The person who gives without making his or her identity known.
- The person who gives without knowing to whom he or she gives, although the recipient knows the identity of the donor.
- The person who gives before being asked.
- The person who gives what one should, but only after being asked.
- The person who gives graciously, but less than one should.
- The person who gives reluctantly and with regret.

#### LOWEST LEVEL OF GIVING

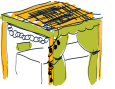


**Chevruta (small group) Study Questions:**

- How does the concept of harvest relate to the idea of giving back to the community?
- According to the text, what are the ways we are instructed to celebrate Sukkot?
- The text emphasizes the importance of first feeding ourselves (literally) before giving thanks. What about filling ourselves up spiritually? How might we do that? And would we give thanks in the same way?

**Whole Group Study Questions:**

- How might philanthropy be seen as a form of spiritual fulfillment?
- What role does gratitude play in both Jewish tradition and philanthropy?
- How can we ensure that our philanthropic efforts are aligned with the values of Jewish tradition?



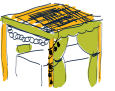
## APPENDIX II - SUKKOT IMAGES



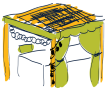
*Image from PJ Library*



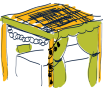
*Image from BibleBeltBalabusta.com*



*From Sukkah City Public Art Project, New York, 2010  
(Learn more [here.](#))*



From Sukkah City Public Art Project, New York, 2010  
(Learn more [here.](#))

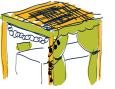


*From Sukkah City Public Art Project, New York, 2010  
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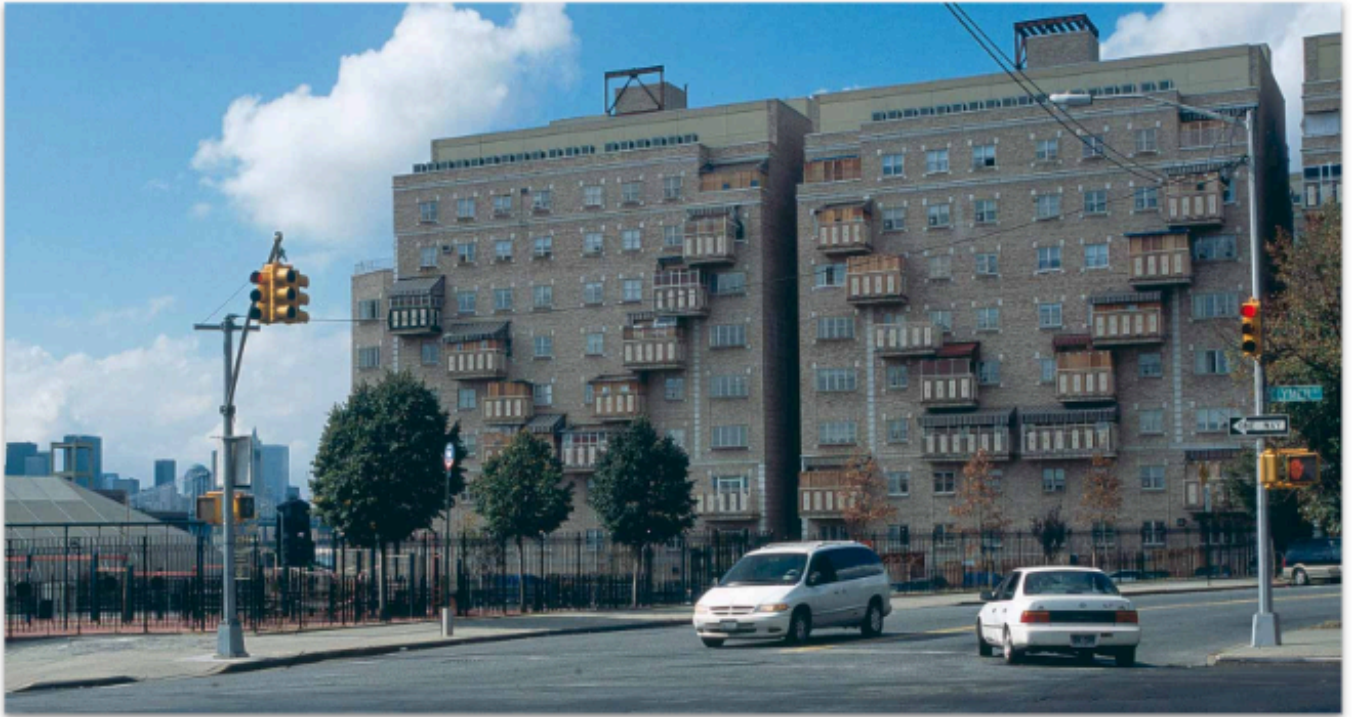
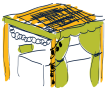


*Campus of Georgetown University, 2013, Henry Grosman and Babak Bryan*

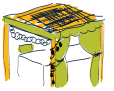




*“Longhouse Sukkah”  
Landau Zinder Architects*



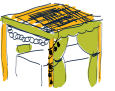
*Photograph, Mimi Levy Lipis*



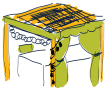
*Matthew Mitchell, Naomi Ng,  
and Parker Wilson, 2019*



*Photograph by Howard Blas, East River Esplanade, New York*



*"The South Austin Sukkah"  
This sukkah was created with locally harvested bamboo.*



*Sukkah x Detroit.*  
See the full image gallery [here](#): and more information [here](#)



# **HOLIDAY ENHANCEMENT GUIDE**

## **SUKKOT**