

## Lewis Baylor

**From:** Elliot Price [dadprice@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Friday, September 13, 2013 6:59 AM  
**To:** 'Elliot Price'  
**Subject:** AJCSS Weekly Announcements - S eptember 15th



## L'Shana Tova Tikatavu

**A happy and healthy New Year! Jewish Education is more than Sunday School – an opportunity is for the family to join your congregation for services and discuss what you learn with your children...**

### Any thoughts of building a Sukkah?

#### Building a Sukkah

*You will dwell in [booths](#) for seven days; all natives of Israel shall dwell in [booths](#).* -Leviticus 23:42

In honor of the holiday's historical significance, we are commanded to dwell in temporary shelters, as our [ancestors](#) did in the wilderness. The temporary shelter is referred to as a sukkah (which is the singular form of the plural word "sukkot"). The sukkah is great fun for the children. Building the sukkah each year satisfies the common childhood [fantasy](#) of building a fort, and dwelling in the sukkah satisfies a child's desire to camp out in the backyard. The commandment to "dwell" in a sukkah can be fulfilled by simply eating all of one's meals there; however, if the weather, climate, and one's health permit, one should spend as much time in the sukkah as possible, including sleeping in it.



A sukkah must have at least two and a half walls covered with a material that will not blow away in the wind. Why two and a half walls? Look at the letters in the word "sukkah" (see the graphic in the heading): one letter has four sides, one has three sides and one has two and a half sides. The "walls" of the sukkah do not have to be solid; canvas covering tied or nailed down is acceptable and quite common in the United States. A

sukkah may be any size, so long as it is large enough for you to fulfill the commandment of dwelling in it. The roof of the sukkah must be made of material referred to as sekhakh (literally, covering). To fulfill the commandment, sekhakh must be something that grew from the ground and was cut off, such as tree branches, corn stalks, bamboo reeds, sticks, or two-by-fours. Sekhakh must be left loose, not tied together or tied down. Sekhakh must be placed sparsely enough that rain can get in, and preferably sparsely enough that the stars can be seen, but not so sparsely that more than ten inches is open at any point or that there is more light than shade. The sekhakh must be put on last. Note: You may put a water-proof cover over the top of the sukkah when it is raining to protect the contents of the sukkah, but you cannot use it as a sukkah while it is covered and you must remove the cover to fulfill the [mitzvah](#) of dwelling in a sukkah.

You can buy do-it-yourself sukkah from various sources online, or you can build your own. I built my own with four 4x4 poles and four 2x4 boards, bolted together and secured by smaller pieces of 2x4 board. My walls are made from canvas painter's drop cloth, attached to the frame by D-rings and curtain hooks. It can be assembled or disassembled in less than two hours by two people.

It is common practice, and highly commendable, to decorate the sukkah. In the northeastern United States, Jews commonly hang dried squash and corn in the sukkah to decorate it, because these vegetables are readily available at that time for the American holidays of Halloween and Thanksgiving. Many families hang artwork drawn by the children on the walls. Building and decorating a sukkah is a fun family project, much like decorating the Christmas tree is for Christians. It is a sad commentary on modern American Judaism that most of the assimilated Jews who complain about being deprived of the fun of having and decorating a Christmas tree have never even heard of Sukkot.

Many Americans, upon seeing a decorated sukkah for the first time, remark on how much the sukkah (and the holiday generally) reminds them of Thanksgiving. This may not be entirely coincidental: I was taught that our American pilgrims, who originated the Thanksgiving holiday, borrowed the idea from Sukkot. The pilgrims were deeply religious people, living their lives in accordance with the Bible. When they were trying to find a way to express their thanks for their survival and for the harvest, they looked to the Bible for an appropriate way of celebrating and found the fall harvest festival of Sukkot. This is not the standard story taught in public schools today (that a Thanksgiving holiday is an ancient English pagan custom that the Pilgrims brought over), but that story doesn't fit with the Pilgrims' strict biblical views.

## AJCSS HIGHLIGHTS

- ★ **Back to school – September 8<sup>th</sup>**
- ★ **Bagels and Blox – September 15<sup>th</sup>**
- ★ **Sukkot Celebration – September 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Shalom,  
Elliot Price  
Principal  
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