

## **Succot**

*Leah Ginsberg*

Shabbat Shalom and welcome to the Emanuel Synagogue! Today we celebrate the third day of Sukkot. This holiday lasts eight days. We celebrate Sukkot to remember our ancestors who lived in small, temporary shelters after they escaped from Egypt. Every family is supposed to build a sukkah.

Many families fulfill this mitzvah at the synagogue rather than building an individual Sukkah. Other people build their own. The sukkah has at least three walls. The roof is made of leaves, straw, or bamboo and must have enough open space so that the stars can be seen. You decorate the sukkah with fruits, vegetables and bright decorations. People eat their meals and some even sleep in it! At the Emanuel Synagogue the students and I, helped to decorate our Sukkah. It is located outside of the Silverman auditorium, where the Kiddush luncheon will be held.

SukKot is a time of harvest and thanksgiving. Important symbols of Sukkot are the lulav and etrog. You shake them both in all 4 directions to say that God is everywhere. A time when I wanted God to be there was when my grandfather died. I wanted him to feel welcome even though he was in a strange place without family. I knew God was there because after his funeral I felt better; I knew he was in a safe place and free of pain.

According to another explanation, the lulav and etrog stand for the main parts of the body. The Etrog is the heart, the palm is the spine, the myrtle is the eye, and the willow is the mouth. When you put them together, it represents a healthy body and soul.

Just like the lulav and etrog represents a healthy body, my mitzvah project deals with helping people return to health. I accomplished this by volunteering at the West Hartford rehabilitation center. I volunteer there twice a week and help with their activities, such as balloon volleyball, playing card games and just spending time with the residents. It makes the patients feel better. I also got to spend time with my Grandmother, who was staying there.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Cantor Cohn, Ms. Judy Fox, Rabbi Small and all my Hebrew school teachers for their time and their patience. Special thanks to my Dad, Mom, Devora, Brian, Mama, Bubbie, Zaddie for helping me prepare for this day. Also, a special remembrance to my Papa who I know is watching me today. Thank you to all my family and friends and everyone here for sharing this special day with me.