

Rejoice on Your Holidays: A Story for Succot
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When the children of neighborhood talk about meeting at “the tree”, they mean the old carob tree at the edge of the neighborhood. Every evening, before the sun goes down, the children gather there to chat, play, and make important decisions. The day after Yom Kippur, too, they met as usual, and Nati said:

“Listen up. Before Succot, we are going to give out free lulavs to all the old people in our neighborhood.” When Nati speaks, everyone listens because Nati is the best-known kid in the neighborhood,. First of all because he’s a great athlete, and secondly and maybe more important- because he is always organizing things. The kids just looked at Nati and didn’t understand what he was talking about.

“Lulavs?” Amir asked. “Where are we going to get lulavs?”

- Do you know the widow Sarah?

The children nodded. Who doesn’t know the widow Sarah? Sarah lives all by herself in a big house surrounded by a beautiful garden. Behind Sarah’s house there is an orchard with different fruit trees, and among them, there is a palm tree.

“But the tree belongs to Sarah, we can’t just go pick from it,” Estie objected in a small voice.

“Sarah doesn’t use the lulavs anyway. Last year they just dried up on the tree,” Adam said. And Benjy added, “At least that way the lulavs will be used and we will have a mitzva.”

“Well,” Ariel said, “why don’t we just ask Sarah for permission?”

“That’s exactly the point,” said Nati. “Sarah went away on vacation and we can’t ask her for permission. But I’m sure that she would agree if we asked her.”

“And it is a shame to have the lulavs just dry up on the tree,” Adam insisted.

The next afternoon, the children met again, this time, in front of Sarah’s house.

Benjy brought a tall ladder and Adi and Jesse brought saws. Only Estie, whose house was close to Sarah’s, was still doubtful. She asked: “Are you sure that we are allowed to pick lulavs without permission? My mother said that Sarah will be coming back just before the holiday, and maybe..” she finished and then fell quiet.

Nati’s face lit up. Suddenly a great idea flashed through his head.

“Come on, gang. Let’s get to work.”

After that, he leaned the ladder against the tree and as swift as a cat, he scrambled up to the top. Two hours later, the palm tree was bare.

One day before Succot, Sarah returned home. She stopped at the entrance to her house and couldn't believe her eyes:

Is it possible?

In the front yard stood a beautiful succah.

A heap of fresh greenery topped it off – big, beautiful palm leaves.

Hesitantly Sarah made her way into the succah. Paper chains were strung along the walls. In the center of the succah on the table was a pile of lulavs wrapped in a damp towel, and nearby, a note:

Dear Sarah,

We hope that you are not angry at us for cutting lulavs and a succah.

We weren't sure that we did the right thing, so we gave you the lulavs.

If you want, we will give them out to anyone who couldn't buy one.

Just let us know if you are interested.

With best holiday wishes,

Nati and the neighborhood kids

Sarah felt tears well up in her eyes, and through the tears, she read the sign hanging in the succah:

“Ve-smachta behagecha, ve-hayita ach sameach”

“You shall rejoice on your holidays – and you shall be completely happy.”

**** Some people would say that the children were “doing a mitzva at the price of doing something forbidden”. What do you think?**