



The Cows

October 17-October 19, 2011

**Simchat Torah, Simchat Torah,
Wave your flag, wave your flag,
March around the Temple,
March around the Temple,
Wave your flag, wave your flag!**

Celebrating Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah

The joy of Sukkot extends for seven days and then flows into Shemini Atzeret- a day containing all the joy of the coming year. The second evening of Shemini Atzeret, we celebrate Simchat Torah: all the Scrolls of the Torah are carried from their ark around the bimah seven times, with dance and song.

Simchat Torah celebrates the yearly cycle of the Torah reading. We finish the Torah and begin again with "In the beginning...". Beginning immediately anew emphasizes the continuity of Jewish learning. The Torah is the foundation, the heart of the Jewish people.

Simchat Torah translates as "Rejoicing in the Torah" and this is a wonderful time to bring even the youngest children to Temple. All the Torah scrolls are taken out and there is dancing and singing-seven whirling, happy, musical hakafot (processions) taking place!

Developing Skills

Math

We have been practicing and reinforcing numbers 1 through 10 during our discussions about Simchat Torah: the 5 books of Moses, going 7 times around the bimah, the 10 Commandments, the concept of order such as first and last, the concept of a cycle represented by a circle.

We've also been talking about spiders, as in Sammy Spider, our class guest this week!!! and counting his amazing 8 legs and then later cutting 8 legs for our art project.

Literacy

We discussed Torahs and read the book, "On Sukkot and Simchat Torah" by Cathy Goldberg Fishman, illustrations by Melanie Hall. In addition to the simple but detailed story, the beautifully drawn pictures alone show the children the sequence of events on Simchat Torah.

We've also been reading Sammy Spider books to honor our leggy guest.

Science

We entered the fascinating world of spiders and learned that they have 8 legs, 8 eyes and that there are many different kinds of spiders. They can have bodies of many different sizes, shapes and colors. They also make webs but these can be very different from each other. The children particularly enjoyed the book, "Spider Names" by Susan Canizares because it contains actual photographs of spiders.

Gross Motor

In the classroom, we did dancing and marching with the Torah to our special music. Marching is a developmental skill that takes time to acquire as it involves coordination between the brain and messages in the large muscles of the arms and legs all working together. As adults, we may take this skill for granted but it's a combination of modeling and practice.

In music class with Miss Beth, she, in a fun way provides opportunities for this. The children are fortunate to have this experience with Miss Beth.

Fine Motor

The children are getting lots of much needed practice painting and cutting to make a special Sammy Spider hat but adding their own personal touch to make a unique creation.

They also have painted fabric for a Torah cover to celebrate Simchat Torah.

Holding a paintbrush and manipulating scissors helps to strengthen the small muscles of the hand and fingers in preparation for holding a pencil.

Social-Self Help

We're working on fostering independence through teaching about clothing fasteners and seeing these skills practiced in housekeeping and during bathroom visits.

We also are encouraging this with lunch boxes and backpacks.

We also are helping children to use their words to express their needs both to us and to the other children, especially during conflicts. We model appropriate words to reflect their feelings.

Judaic

We started the week with Havdalah. We used stories, music, activities and projects to understand and appreciate the history and customs of Sukkot and Simchat Torah. The children have enjoyed our beautiful sukkah that Miss Jacki lovingly made and also the experience of sharing lunch together in the large sukkah outside.

Study Words: Torah-five books of Moses, Simchat Torah- rejoicing in the Torah, degel-flag, kahol-blue, lavan-white, shahor-black, akaveesh-spider, shmone-eight, reguel-legs

Shabbat Shalom,
Morah Fran and Morah Jacki