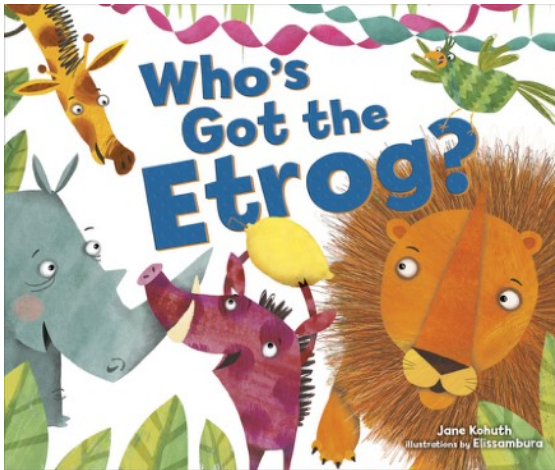


## Who's Got the Etrog?

### Parent & Educator Guide

by Jane Kohuth



### About the Book

Auntie Sanyu, who lives in an Abayudaya Jewish community in Uganda, builds a sukkah in her garden. Curious wildlife—the Warthog, the Lion, the Giraffe, the Rhino, and other animals—come to celebrate the Sukkot holiday with her. They all want to shake the lulav and the etrog, but Warthog loves the etrog so much, he can't bear to share it, and the other guests are getting mad. Can Auntie Sanyu's niece Sara help solve the problem?

### About the Author

When **Jane Kohuth** was growing up in Brooklyn, she looked forward to decorating her back porch as a sukkah every year and to unwrapping the etrog from its nest of soft flax. She has a master's degree in Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School. Her previous books include *Estie the Mensch* and *Anne Frank's Chestnut Tree*. Jane lives in Holliston, Massachusetts. For more about Jane, visit her website at [janekohuth.com](http://janekohuth.com)

### Who's Got the Etrog?

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### About the Illustrator

**Elissambura** is an illustrator of many children's books. She works in a variety of techniques, including digital and mixed media. Her favorite subject is animals. She lives in Argentina.

## About the Holiday of Sukkot

### What is Sukkot?

Sukkot is a harvest festival that begins at the full moon, five days after Yom Kippur. Sukkot means “booths,” and is named for the temporary shelters in which the Israelites lived while they wandered through the wilderness before entering Canaan. Sukkot is celebrated for seven days, with an additional festival on the eighth day called Shemini Atzeret. In biblical times, Sukkot was the most important holiday of the year! When the Pilgrims, who came to North America in 1621, wanted to celebrate a good harvest, they looked to the Bible, and Sukkot became the inspiration for the American holiday of Thanksgiving.

### What Is a Sukkah?

In the Torah, the book of Leviticus, says, “You shall live in huts seven days in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelites live in huts when I brought them out of Egypt (23:24).” In addition to commemorating the wandering of the Israelites in the desert, the sukkah (plural *sukkot*), recalls the huts that people lived in during harvest time, when the fields were too far away to return home every night. The fragile sukkah also symbolizes our need for G-d’s shelter and protection.

A sukkah must be temporary, can be made of any materials, must have at least two walls and part of a third, and the roof must be open enough so that starlight is visible at night. You can decorate a sukkah any way you like – many people hang fruits and vegetables as well as paper ornaments and chains from the branches on the roof, and hang art on the walls. The Talmud, a compilation of Jewish law and teachings, even contains recommendations for how to decorate the sukkah. People also put tables and chairs in the sukkah, so they can eat there during the holiday. Some people even sleep there!

There is a blessing to say when you spend time in a sukkah:

Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech ha-olam a-sher ki-de-sha-nu be-mitz-vo-tav ve-tzi-va-nu le-shev ba-sukkah.

*Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, Ruler of the universe, who has sanctified us with G-d’s commandments, and commanded us to dwell in the sukkah.*

## What Are the Lulav and Etrog?

The Torah says that as part of the celebration of Sukkot, “You shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your G-d seven days” (Lev. 23:40). According to Jewish tradition, the four species referred to are the citron (*etrog*), palm (*lulav*), myrtle (*hadas*), and willow (*aravah*). The three types of branches are bound together, and called the lulav. Either at home or at synagogue, you can hold the lulav in your right hand (with the spine of the palm branch facing you) and the etrog in your left hand (with the stem facing down) and say the blessing:

Ba-ruch A-tah Ado-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech ha-olam a-sher ki-de-sha-nu be-mitz-vo-tav ve-tzi-va-nu al netilat lulav.

*Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, Ruler of the Universe, who has sanctified us with G-d’s commandments and commanded us regarding taking the lulav.*

You then shake the lulav in each direction – forward, to the right, over the shoulder (behind), to the left, upward, and downward. This tradition dates back to the time of the Temple in Jerusalem, and is meant to show that G-d is everywhere.

## The Tradition of Inviting Guests to the Sukkah

In the past it was traditional to invite at least one poor person to join you in your sukkah for a holiday meal. Today people often donate money or food. This tradition of hospitality to guests (*hakhnasat orekhim*) is inspired by the first patriarch of the Jewish people, Abraham, who would wait outside his tent, ready to welcome hungry, thirsty travelers.

In Jewish mystical tradition (*kabbalah*), we also welcome symbolic guests to the sukkah – the Biblical figures Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph, and David. Each represents one of the *sefirot*, or aspects of G-d. These guests are called the *Ushpizin*, which is the Aramaic word for “guests.” Each of these famous guests experienced periods of wandering or exile, and so also help to remind us of the wandering and exile associated with the holiday of Sukkot and the history of the Jewish people. Today, we might also use this tradition to remind us of people around the world in need of welcome and shelter. We might also consider inviting the Jewish matriarchs, as well as other famous and meaningful figures in Jewish history.

*(Sources: The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions, Ronald L. Eisenberg, 2004; The Complete How to Handbook for Jewish Living, Kerry M. Olitzky and Ronald H. Isaacs, KTAV 2004; Jewish Holidays All Year Round, Ilene Cooper, Abrams 2002; Celebrate!: The Complete Jewish Holidays Handbook, Jason Aronson Inc. 1994)*

## About the Abayudaya

**Who's Got the Etrog** is set in the Abayudaya Jewish community, which is scattered through several villages in the green hills of Eastern Uganda in Africa. This vibrant and surprising group was founded between 1917 and 1920 by a warrior and leader named Semei Kakungulu. Christian missionaries introduced Kakungulu to the Christian Bible, but after his own study, he adopted only the Hebrew Bible and began a practice very much like Judaism. The group he founded became known as the Abayudaya, a word in the local Luganda language which can be translated to mean, "people of Judah," or simply, "the Jews." Early contact with a European Jew helped them to learn about Jewish holidays and observance.

At its peak, the Abayudaya community numbered about 8,000. When Kakungulu died in 1928, that number decreased. But it was the brutal rule of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, which lasted from 1971-1979, that decimated the Abayudaya community. Idi Amin outlawed Judaism, closed synagogues, forbade Jewish practice and books, and forced Jewish children to attend Catholic schools. With great courage and under threat of violence, the Abayudaya continued to practice in secret, but by 1980 there were fewer than 300 members of the Abayudaya community left.

The remainder of the community did not give up. When Idi Amin was overthrown and freedom of religion was instituted in Uganda, an Abayudaya youth movement, including a kibbutz where children could study Judaism and Hebrew, helped revitalize the Jewish community. When volunteers from the Jewish group Kulanu arrived in 1995 (later followed by the group Be'chol Lashon), they helped bring the Abayudaya into contact with the larger Jewish world. These groups have helped the community to build schools and to start programs to address the extreme poverty in an area where most people rely on subsistence farming to survive.

The Abayudaya practice Conservative Judaism, their first rabbi, Gershom Sizomu was ordained by the Conservative movement, and many members of the community have officially converted. They observe Shabbat and the rules of Kashrut, and on Sukkot they construct *sukkot* (plural of *sukkah*) covered with banana leaves. Before their introduction to traditional Jewish liturgy, the Abayudaya set Psalms translated into Luganda to their own music, and they continue to combine their own music and Luganda language with the traditional Hebrew service. In 2005, their album, "Abayudaya: Music from the Jewish people of Uganda," was nominated for a Grammy award.

Today the Abayudaya community has about 2,000 members, a primary school, a high school, and a yeshiva. The Abayudaya Women's Association runs conferences, a successful micro-credit program, and a Torah study course for women. In 2004, the Abayudaya spearheaded efforts to create a regional fair trade coffee co-op. Today the co-op includes 2,000 Jewish, Christian, and Muslim farmers, who call their coffee, "Mirembe Kawomera," which means "Delicious Peace," in Luganda.

*Sources Include: [kulanu.org](http://kulanu.org); [bechollashon.org](http://bechollashon.org); "The Jewish Tribe in Uganda," by Menucha Chana Levin, [aish.com](http://aish.com); "In Rural Uganda, Conservative Prayer Services with an African Lilt," by Melanie Lidman, *The Times of Israel*; "In Uganda, Coffee Co-op Blends Jewish, Muslim and Christian Farmers," by Melanie Lidman, *The Times of Israel*; "Election," by Matthew Fishbane, *Tablet Magazine**

If you would like to learn more about the Abayudaya and other Jewish communities around the world, the organizations [Kulanu](http://Kulanu) and [Be'chol Lashon](http://Be'chol Lashon) are a great place to start. Visit their websites for photos, videos, articles, and music!

## Discussion Questions

**Where in the world do Jewish people live? Where have Jewish people lived in the past?**

*This can be an opportunity to discuss how, during the long history of the Jewish people, Jews have created communities all over the world. Jews communities outside of Israel are called the Jewish Diaspora. According to the World Jewish Congress, by the mid-1500s, there were Jewish communities in places such as India, China, Brazil, Yemen, Afghanistan, Jamaica, Ethiopia, and Uganda. Most Jewish people in the United States are Ashkenazi Jews, meaning that their immediate ancestors came from Europe, but about half of the Jews in Israel have ancestors who came from Middle Eastern communities. Sephardi Jews have ancestors who moved to various communities around the world after they were expelled from Spain in the 15th century. There are a number of African Jewish communities, the most well-known of which is the Beta Israel of Ethiopia, which dates back 2,500 years, and traces it's origins to the tribe of Dan.*

**What do Jewish people look like?**

*Jewish people come in all races, colors, shapes, and sizes! Through time, people in Jewish communities around the world intermarried and came to look like the people around them. Today, in the United States, the Jewish community continues to grow more diverse through conversion, marriage, and adoption. Though we look different, and have various cultural traditions, Jewish people of all backgrounds consider themselves part of the same people, and share things like Torah, Shabbat, mikvot (ritual baths), synagogues, and tallitot (prayer shawls).*

**If you could invite anyone to your sukkah, who would you invite? Why?**

**Can you remember a time that you had a hard time sharing? Have you ever had something special that it was hard to share? Were you able to share it? How did you feel when you did?**

Source: [http://bechollashon.org/about/jewish\\_diversity.php](http://bechollashon.org/about/jewish_diversity.php) Visit the websites of Bechol Lashon and Kulanu for lots more information! <https://kulanu.org>