

The Man Behind the Song *Sukkot*

Topic

Sukkot, The Life of Emanuel Harussi

Grade Level(s):

3rd – 7th

Big Ideas

Writing Hebrew poetry can be a way of asserting the Zionist ideal.

Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Understand the path Emanuel Harussi took to become a Hebrew poet
2. Learn to read and sing the song Sukkot
3. Analyze the song's message
4. Create a Sukkot song (in English or Hebrew)

Relevant Vocabulary

<p>חֵדֶר (<i>cheider</i>, more precisely pronounced <i>cheder</i>)</p>	A traditional Jewish elementary school (literally: room)
<p>פִּטְיֵט (<i>patish</i>)</p>	hammer
<p>מַסְמֵיר (<i>masmeir</i>)</p>	nail
<p>מְהֵיר (<i>maheir</i>)</p>	quickly
<p>מָחָר (<i>mahar</i>)</p>	tomorrow
<p>לְבִנוֹת (<i>livnot</i>)</p>	to build

Materials / Technology Needed

- [Videography of Emanuel Harussi's Life](#) -
- [Video of the song "Sukkot \(Hammer and Nail\)"](#)
- Lyrics to "Sukkot (Hammer and Nail)" (included at the end of the activity)
- Create an Infogram of Emanuel Harussi's life using [Canva](#) or visual representation using the media of your choice

Background

Emanuel Yinnon Novograbelski was born in 1903 in Nikolayv in the Russian Empire. The diverse Jewish community in Nikolayv, numbering more than 20,000 at that time, included a small group of *Hovevei Zion* (Lovers of Zion)—an early group of Eastern European Zionists—and the followers of the Rabbi of Lubavich. Both groups had a major influence on Emanuel's life. The Zionist group believed in the revival of the Hebrew language and longed for the recreation of a Jewish homeland in the land of Israel. Emanuel started his formal Jewish education in a *cheider* at the age of 3. His father, Ben Zion, taught him Hebrew with the Sephardic pronunciation. At age 6 his father introduced him to Hayim Nahman Bialik, the man who later became known as Israel's national poet. Emanuel started writing Hebrew poetry from a young age. He also combined his love for *nigunim* (tunes), which he learned from his mother, into his songs. A staunch Zionist, he immigrated to Jaffa at the age of 21. In 1933 Emanuel changed his name to Emanuel Harussi, "Emanuel the Russian."

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Emanuel Harussi wrote the song “Building a Sukkah” and gave it to Mordechai Zeira to compose the music. The song was published in the Children’s Appendix of the newspaper *Davar* on October 14, 1932. Many years later Nahum Nardi composed a different melody for the song.

Please watch the [videography](#) for additional information on Harussi’s life and legacy.

Building a Sukkah

Traditionally, Jews build *sukkot* (temporary shelters) for the holiday of Sukkot. Since the holiday of Sukkot comes five days after Yom Kippur, there is a sense of urgency to have the *sukkah* ready on time during this busy time of year. The walls can be built from any materials (*Shulhan Aruch* 630); thus, the hammer and nails (פטיש ומסמר) mentioned in the song are especially important. The roof must be made from סכך (*s’chach*)—natural items not attached to the ground, like leaves or branches (*Shulhan Aruch* 628). Children often enjoy helping in the building of the *sukkah*. Depending on their age, children can build the walls, add branches, decorate the *sukkah*, or set up the table for meals.

Prepare in Advance

Enlist a volunteer (*madrich*, parent, or teacher) to act as Emanuel Harussi. Make sure the invitee knows Emanuel Harussi’s life story. The guest will narrate the story of Emanuel Harussi in the first person when students visit the communal *sukkah* during the activity.

Description of Activities

Trigger

Ask students to share a reward they ever received from their parents after they did something the parents asked them for. Ask them what they did after receiving the reward. Did they continue doing the same thing to get more rewards?

Tell students that they will see a video about a Hebrew poet in a few minutes. Ask students to be on the lookout to find out the reward Emanuel Harussi received from his father when he was a young boy.

Activities

- 1) Share the video of Emanuel Harussi’s life with the class (first video listed in Materials). Divide the class in groups of 3-4 students. Use the routine [Think-Pair-Share](#). Ask students to take a few minutes to think about the following questions:
 - a) What events in Emanuel Harussi’s life shaped his vocation as a Hebrew poet? Why was it so important for him to write in Hebrew?

Ask students to turn to a nearby student to share their thoughts.

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- 2) Reflect—Teachers lead a whole class discussion about the highlights and takeaways of Emanuel Harussi’s life and production. Sample questions below:
 - a) Why was it so important for Emanuel Harussi’s father that his son become a Hebrew poet?
 - b) Hila Harussi, Emanuel’s great granddaughter, claims that her great grandfather had a “peculiar upbringing.” How? Explain.
 - c) Emanuel changed his name from Emanuel Novograbelski to Emanuel Harussi. What is the significance of his name change or any name change?
 - d) Hila Harussi, Emanuel Harussi’s great granddaughter, described her great grandfather as a “revolutionary.” How was this characteristic reflected throughout his life?
 - e) At 4:53 minutes into the video, the name of the Sukkot song is presented as “בונים סוכה” (*Bonim Sukkah, Build a Sukkah*.) The song’s title was later changed to “*Sukkot*.” The song is also known in Israel as “*Patish – Masmer* (Hammer and Nail).” Which name do you like best and why?
- 3) Group assignment –
 - a) Create a biographical sketch of the life of Emanuel Harussi using [Canva](#).
- 4) *Ushpizin*—Students visit the communal *sukkah* (the song “Sukkot” should be playing in the background as students enter the *sukkah*). Students interact with Emanuel Harussi (as played by the volunteer enlisted in advance) and get to ask him questions about his life.
- 5) Play the song twice. Ask students to listen for words they may understand. Write the words on the board. Then, read the song to the students with the proper intonation (see Appendix). Analyze the song by asking students to look at the color-coded words:

פַּטִּיֵשׁ, מַסְמֵר
מְהֵר, מְהֵר,
סִכָּה לְבָנוֹת,

Ask students why Emanuel Harussi made a point of repeating the word מְהֵר in the song. Lead students into a discussion about the importance of the timing in the celebration of the Jewish holidays. Guide students to view building the *sukkah* quickly as a metaphor for the Zionist ideal to build the Jewish homeland in Israel quickly.

- 6) Pair students and ask them to read the song taking turns. Teach the song or have the music teacher teach it. Students should learn to sing the song.
- 7) Ask students to create and record a Sukkot song (in Hebrew or English).

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Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

For learners who need more assistance

- Ask students to illustrate the song.
- Create a visual representation of the items involved in the construction of a *sukkah* using Legos, clay, or other materials.

For learners who need extension opportunities

- Research Emanuel Harussi's literary production and create a playlist with three of his Hebrew children's songs.
- Put the words of the song "Sukkot (Patish Masmer)" to different music. Does the new melody affect how the words of the song are understood? Explain.

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<p>“<i>Sukkot</i> (Hammer and Nail)” Words: Emanuel Harussi Music: Nahum Nardi Translation: hebrewsongs.com</p>	<p>פְּטִישׁ מִסֵּמֶר מִיָּלִים : עֲמֻנֹאֵל הָרוּסִי לַחַן : נַחֻם נֶרְדִּי</p>
<p>A hammer, a nail, Let's put to our avail, A sukkah to build, Lads and lasses all. La la la...</p>	<p>פְּטִישׁ, מִסֵּמֶר נִיקַח מֵהָר. סִפָּה לְבָנוֹת, בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת. לַל, לַל</p>
<p>Some planks we'll grab, And branches for the thatch, Hang décor from the roof, For the holiday. La la la...</p>	<p>קָרְשִׁים נִיקַח וְעֵנָפִים לְסִפָּד קֶשֶׁט הַגָּג לְכַבֹּד הַחֹג. לַל, לַל</p>
<p>Stick by stick, A sukkah we'll build. Some planks we'll grab, Buy reeds for the thatch. La la la...</p>	<p>קָנָה, קָנָה, סִפָּה נְבִנָה. קָרְשִׁים נִיקַח, קָנִי סוּף לְסִפָּד. לַל, לַל</p>
<p>Quickly, quickly, Or late we'll be: No time to delay, Sukkot's a day away. La la la...</p>	<p>מְהֵרָה, מְהֵרָה, פֶּן נֵאָחֵר, אֵין פְּנְאֵי חַפּוֹת, מְחַר סֻכּוֹת. לַל, לַל</p>