

מה טוב Ma Tovu

Siddur Sim Shalom, page 61

מה טוב

אֶהְלִיךָ יַעֲקֹב,

מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

How good

are your tents, Jacob,

your dwellings, Israel!

Big Idea: How good is this place!

Ma Tovu is one of the first pieces we sing in the morning service. It reminds us how good it is to be together at the temple, and how blessed we are to have such a beautiful place to pray!

Not only does the building provide us a shelter from the weather, it also gives us a place where our community can come together to pray, celebrate holidays and be with friends and family.

Did you know?

You may be wondering: Who was Jacob? And, why does it say “how good are your tents, Jacob?” Why doesn’t it say “how good are your houses”?

Jacob lived a long time ago, in the days of the Torah. He was the son of Isaac and Rebecca, and the grandson of Abraham and Sarah. Jacob, who was also called Israel, had children and grandchildren who became the 12 tribes of Israel. The people of these tribes were called the “People of Israel”, or in short – “Israel”. Sometimes, they were referred to as the “Children of Jacob” or even just “Jacob”.

Back in those Torah days, our ancestors lived in tents. Sometimes, when there was no more food around for their grazing animals, like camels, sheep and goats, the people would fold up their tents quickly and move them to another area that had more food for their animals. Since a house is not moveable, they lived in large tents instead.



Key words:

מֵה טוֹב - how good

אֹהֲלֶיךָ - your tents

יַעֲקֹב - Jacob

מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיךָ - your dwellings

יִשְׂרָאֵל - Israel