

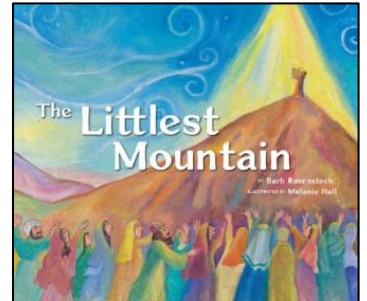
Read the PJ Library Book

The Littlest Mountain (4's)

By Barb Rosenstock

Illustrated by Melanie Hall

Published by KAR-BEN Publishing



Synopsis

In this retelling of an ancient legend, God must choose from which mountaintop to give the Jewish people laws to follow. Every mountaintop wants this privilege and boasts about greatness. In the end, it is the littlest and humblest mountain, Mt. Sinai, that receives the honor.

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Love of Torah and Learning - *A-ha-vat To-rah* - אהבת תורה

Good manners (the right path) - *De-rech e-retz* - דרך ארץ

Introducing the value of love of Torah / learning *Ahavat Torah*

From Jewish teachings

“The Torah is a tree of life to those who cling to it, and all who uphold it are happy” (Proverbs 3:18). The Torah is an instruction manual for life, filled with guidance for building good relationships with others and being moral and kind people. The Hebrew word “Torah” means teaching. According to tradition, there is no end to the teachings of the Torah. “Turn it and turn it... for all is in it” *Pirkei Avot* 5:22. Love of Torah and learning involves a willingness to read the same text again and again, each time taking away new meaning.

For the teacher

- How do you model a love of learning in the early childhood classroom?
- What lessons and ideas about Torah do you hope to convey to your students over the course of the school year?
- What is one idea or story from the Torah that impacts your life in some way?



Questions for children

- According to this book, why did the people of the world need the Torah?
- When we study Torah, we read the stories and rules over and over again, each time trying to understand them in new ways. What is a book that you love to read again and again? Why is it good to read something more than once?
- How can a person show he or she appreciates the Torah and loves to learn new things?

Introducing the value of love of good manners
Derech erez

<p>From Jewish teachings Derech erez literally means “the way of the land,” but it is understood as decent behavior and common courtesy. <i>Pirkei Avot</i>, a compilation of ethical teachings often translated as <i>Ethics of our Ancestors</i>, quotes Rabbi Eleazar ben Azaryah: “If there is no Torah, there is no derech erez, and if there is no derech erez, there is no Torah” [3:23]. The rabbis teach us that beyond following the Torah’s basic rules of conduct, we should add a moral component.</p>	<p>For the teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which manners do you believe children should develop? How do you encourage good manners amongst your students? • Why are good manners important? • Which good manners do you exemplify? Which manners could use strengthening? 	<p>Questions for children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways did the Littlest Mountain act differently than the other mountains? • When we speak politely and show respect to others, we are using good manners. In Hebrew we call good manners “derech erez.” When in our story did the littlest mountain exhibit derech erez? • Sharing, saying “please” and “thank you,” and holding the door for others are examples of good manners. What other actions show good manners? For example, how do you show good manners when you’re eating a meal?
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Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

How would your classroom change?

How will the books and values come to life?

In the Classroom / Centers

- ☆ **Ahavat Torah/love of Torah and learning:** Allow children to create a personal Torah scroll in your **literacy center**. Use 8.5”x11” paper cut in half lengthwise, and tape ends together. The *atzei chayim* (Trees of Life) or wooden dowels might be wooden clothes pins or twigs. Invite children to illustrate a favorite Torah story, holiday celebration, or mitzvah. Roll the ends toward the center and tie with a ribbon.
- ☆ **Ahavat Torah/love of Torah and learning:** Have a *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*, an “all-night” study session in your **library**. [Another legend relates that the Israelites overslept on the morning they were to receive the Ten Commandments. To compensate for this long-ago error, many Jews stay awake and study Torah the night before Shavuot.] Invite children to wear pajamas to school and have a read-a-thon. How many PJ Library books can you read?
- ☆ **Derech erez/good manners:** Good manners includes following the rules of the classroom. Ask the children to act out the important rules and routines of the classroom, such as cleaning up snack, neatly stacking blocks, and color-coding crayons. Children might take turns photographing one another modeling these behaviors. Keep this visual record in your **social studies corner**.
- ☆ **Derech erez/good manners:** For large-group **dramatic play** or **charades**, quietly give an action or scenario to a student(s) to act out and guess, such as opening a door for a friend, chewing food with your mouth closed, or shaking hands when you meet someone new.



Engage the families in your community

How can you involve families and deepen home-school relationships?

Celebrate Learning

A *siyyum* (si-**yum**) is a ceremony of completion of a course of study, and a promise to continue to learn. Celebrate your students' accomplishments this year and invite families to a classroom *siyyum*. Enlist the children's help in choosing a favorite PJ Library book to read and discuss, Hebrew songs to sing, and documentation from special projects you will display. Share some yummy treats, and talk about where children are headed next year.

Pathway to manners

Derech Eretz is sometimes translated as "the right path." Create a mini pathway in your lobby or classroom that takes families on a tour of manners with stations, such as putting a napkin on your lap at the table, saying "How do you do" as you shake hands, or covering your mouth when you sneeze.

At Home

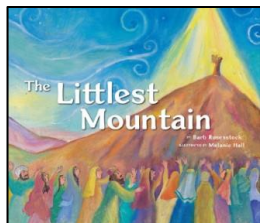
See below for a mini-newsletter about this book. Cut on the dotted line to send directly to families, or copy



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DISCUSS Jewish values

Love of Torah and learning/*ahavat Torah*

Studying Torah and all learning takes a willingness to read or practice the same thing again and again, trying to gain new meaning.

- What books do we love to read again and again? Why?

Good manners/*derecho erez*

The Hebrew term *derech erez* (literally, the way of the land) refers to the way we treat others with respect and kindness.

- In our family, which manners are most important?
- How can we signal a need to talk without interrupting one another?

DO fun stuff at home

Derech erez family hike



Maybe the best way to show respect for others' rules is to make up some rules of your own. Take a family walk and give each member of the family a chance to make rules for part of the adventure, such as stop and smell a flower, do a silly walk, or hoot like an owl.

MORE resources

PJ Library Shavuot blog: <http://bit.ly/PJblog-shavuot>
Shavuot for kids: <http://tinyurl.com/kveller-Shavuot>
Disney's "How D'Ye Do and Shake Hands":
<http://bit.ly/shake-hands-song>