



First Rain

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On one foot: There are conflicting emotions that come with the choice to “make *aliyah*,” or move to Israel. In this book, the family strives to integrate into their new community, while maintaining deep relationship with relatives back home.

Highlighted Jewish Values:

Loving Israel

A-ha-vat Yis-ra-el

אַהַבַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל

Honoring our elders

Ki-bud ze-kei-nim

כְּבוֹד זְקֵנִים

Connection to the theme of Journeys

For many Jewish families the idea of making *aliyah* (literally “going up”) to Israel is the quintessential journey. Any time a family moves, even to another house across the street, it creates opportunities for growth as well as challenges.

Optional preparation for reading the story:

Collect photographs of places that are illustrated in the book, along with a map of Israel, and bring them to class. (See examples on our Journeys Pinterest page <https://www.pinterest.com/pjgts/journeys/>) Prepare word cards with matching pictures for the book’s Hebrew vocabulary.

Before You Read

Jewish Values and Background Information

Loving Israel – *Ahavat Yisrael*

Three aspects of this value to consider

- Learning about Israel includes language, geography, culture, climate, and history
- Living in Israel is one way to show one’s love for Israel
- Israel is one aspect of *k’lal Yisrael*, the global Jewish community

Love of Israel encompasses love for the People of Israel and a love of the land itself. Not only is it a “land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:17), but it also benefits from the beautiful “lands all around her” (Ezekiel 5:5). It is a country of tremendous cultural, religious, and geographical diversity. The influx of Jewish immigrants from all over the world has led to a mixture of cultures co-existing in a small geographical area. Many Jews take pride in the accomplishments of this tiny country since it became a state in 1948. How do we help young children begin to build a relationship with Israel that will grow and develop with them?

Honoring our elders – *Kibud zekeinim*

Three aspects of this value to consider

- Honoring our elders includes sharing our time and ideas with them
- We are responsible for helping our elders
- One way to honor someone is by showing gratitude for their love and attention

The Torah teaches “You shall rise up before the aged and show deference to the elderly” (Leviticus 19:32). According to the Talmud, a collection of rabbinic commentaries, the Hebrew word for elderly, *zakein* (*z’keinim* is plural), is an acronym that stands for “*zeh shekaneh chachma*” – this [person] has acquired wisdom. Jewish tradition respects the notion that we gain understanding of life through our accumulated experiences.

When You Read

Introducing the story and engaging the children

Set the stage with questions

What does “first rain” mean?


In this book the girl on the cover moves to Israel. What are some of the things you think she will do there? How will her life change/stay the same?

Choose a storytelling technique (optional)




1. **Map it:** Display a large map of Israel in class, possibly on the floor in the center of a reading circle, or provide smaller maps to teams of two to four students. As a place is mentioned in the book, ask your students to find the location on the map. Add stickers to visited spots.
2. **Word recognition:** Build vocabulary by challenging students to learn the Hebrew words in the story. As new words arise, write them with the children, or ask your students to match prepared cards with a picture of the named object or action.

After You Read

Making connections and making it personal

Loving Israel	Honoring our elders
<p>Discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first page of the book says Abby’s parents “always dreamed of living in Israel.” Why do you think Abby’s parents always dreamed of living there? • Aliyah is special term used for moving to Israel. It is not used for any other place. It is the same word when you are called to the Torah for an honor. It means “going up.” Why are the words the same? • What did you learn about Israel from this book? If you were Abby, what else would you want to know about Israel? • Why is rain such a big deal in Israel? 	<p>Discuss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to show honor or respect to someone? • In what ways does Abby honor her grandmother? • Can you give examples of honoring elders in your life? 



Loving Israel	Honoring our elders
Activities	Activities
<p>Connect the dots: Gather photos from Israel.</p>  <p>Photos might include family or friends that live there, postcards, or images students collect. Connect each picture with a string to the appropriate place on a large Israel map. (Picture courtesy of Beth Sholom Early Childhood Center in Potomac, MD)</p> <p>Social media: Share photos via Instagram or Tumblr with a class of Israeli students.</p> <p>Spa day: Order some “mud” from the Dead Sea for facials. Invite family members or school staff as guests.</p>	<p>Act it out: Bring in a box filled with clothes, wigs, canes, and empty glasses frames that students can try on. Provide kids with scenarios to enact, such as an older adult needing help at the grocery store or teaching a senior adult how to use an electronic tablet or video game.</p> <p>Time for tea: Brainstorm with your students how to create a special tea party for some honored older guests. Think about invitations, décor, food, and entertainment. Will you include anyone via computer?</p>  <p>Learning from elders: To students in grades K-2, most people they meet are older than they are, and may have important ideas to share and teach. Design an interview protocol so your students can learn from many of the people they encounter in your school and synagogue.</p>
Engaging families – loving Israel	Engaging families – honoring our elders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Israeli foods cook-off: Challenge your families to find simple Israeli recipes to try at home. Share recipes (and food) at school. Perhaps your class will host a cooking event. Enlist your families’ help in sending care packages and letters to Israeli soldiers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend that your families talk about the things they have learned from some of their elders. They might want to call a relative to trigger their memory or to learn something new. Write the stories down in a family folklore book, and add to the book as time goes by. Perhaps families will share their book with the class. 