

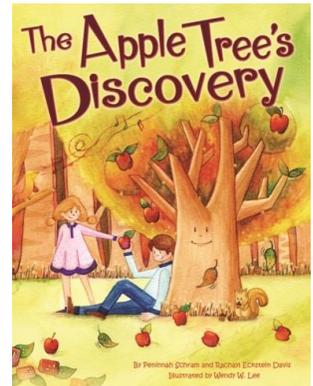
Read the PJ Library Book

The Apple Tree's Discovery (4's)

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Synopsis

A little apple tree stands alone amongst the majestic trees of a forest. The tree finds such joy in looking at the night sky that it would like to have stars on its branches. Though the tree gives shelter to animals, and shade and fruit to passers-by, the tree doesn't feel special without stars on its branches. God teaches the tree patience, and ultimately shows the tree where to find its very own stars.

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Being happy with what you have - *sa-me-ach b'chel-ko* - שְׂמֵחַ בְּחֵלְקוֹ

Patience - *sav-la-nut* - סְבִלְנוּת

Self-worth/Created in the image of God -

Niv-ra B'Tze-lem E-lo-kim - [אֱלֹקִים] נִבְרָא בְּצֶלֶם

Love of nature - *a-ha-vat ha-bri-yot* - אַהֲבַת הַבְּרִיּוֹת

Being happy with what you have – sameach b'chelko. In *Pirkei Avot*, the Ethics of our Ancestors, Ben Zoma says, “Who is rich? The one who is happy with what he has.” [4:1] Was Ben Zoma ahead of his time, or has materialism plagued humankind for centuries? Ben Zoma tells us that wealth is an internal property, independent of a monetary amount or number of possessions. Many people ask, “Does this mean we should not aspire to improve our station in life?” We can always work to improve ourselves. This *mishna* (a teaching) cautions us not to judge ourselves or others based on what we have, but rather on who we are.

Patience – savlanut. *The Apple Tree's Discovery* deals with some of the most difficult human challenges. Learning patience is no easy task at any age. According to Rabbi Nehemiah, a second

century scholar, even the Earth itself had to learn patience. He draws a parallel between Creation and the harvesting of a fig tree, whose fruit ripen in stages. Rabbi Nehemiah suggests “[Everything was created at the beginning but] became visible only at the time designated for it” Sefer Ha-Agadah, Heaven and Earth, section 19.

Self-worth/Created in the Image of God – B'tzelem Elokim.

There is some controversy about how much praise we ought to shower on children and what exactly deserves praise. Many researchers say that excessive praise may actually lower a child's self-esteem. The concept of being created “*b'tzelem elokim*,” in God's image, means each of us has worth solely because we exist and think, and not because we can accomplish a particular task.



Love of nature – Ahavat Ha-briyot. This Hebrew phrase is usually used in connection with love of God's creatures, but it can be extended to include all of God's creations in the world. This book not only focuses on the uniqueness of the apple tree compared to other trees in the forest, but touches on the beauty of the passing seasons.

Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

**How would your classroom change?
How will families be involved?**

In the Classroom / Centers

- ✧ **Being happy with what you have:** This concept is about learning gratitude and optimism. While some teachers paraphrase this teaching as “You get what you get and you don't get upset,” the lesson goes beyond the example of accepting an unwelcome snack. (At a special **snack time**, have acceptable second choices available if a child gets a vanilla cupcake when he wanted chocolate.) Planning for **playground time** or other class **events** provide a great opportunity for talking about being happy with what you have. Manage expectations by asking what children like or hope to do. Think ahead about Plan B if a desired outcome or activity doesn't happen.
- ✧ **Patience:** Many classrooms use a version of a Native American talking stick during **morning meeting** to identify whose turn it is to speak. Similarly, we might create a “waiting badge” to recognize who is waiting to use a toy or piece of **playground** equipment.
- ✧ **Created in the Image of God:** We are all reflections of God's work on earth. Put mirrors in the **dramatic play** area, **block center**, and above the **hand washing sink** to allow children to see themselves at work, at play, and taking care of their bodies.
- ✧ **Created in the Image of God:** Play CDs from the PJ Library music collection in your **music center**. Rick Recht's “Free to Be the Jew in Me” and “Look At Me” (from CDs of the same name) celebrate being human – and Jewish.
- ✧ **Love of nature:** Celebrate the outdoors by spending time outside in (almost) any weather. Bring the outdoors inside with a variety of plants for children to take care of. The **job chart** can include plant watering and measuring for growth or leaf counting.



Bridging Home and School

I can't wait!

If you develop a waiting routine in class that works, share it with your families. You might teach the children a (quiet) song, such as “If I’m waiting and I know it, count to ten...” or you come up with a tai chi type of exercise that involves the children pretending to be a seed growing into an apple tree. What do your families suggest to help children wait through seemingly endless phone calls?

What should we wear?

Explain that you will be exploring nature and the seasons with the children at school, comparing each season to the pages in *The Apple Tree’s Discovery*. Ask families to send appropriate clothing to school to enable you to go outdoors in all kinds of weather. Families might send in photos of their child in all types of weather gear – or you could take those pictures on your class adventures. This helps children understand how the right clothing supports their appreciation of the great outdoors. Are any of your classroom family members nature buffs who would like to lead the children in a nature walk or family nature project? Invite your organization’s leadership to come along on your adventure!

Family Engagement at Home

The star inside you

God shows the apple tree that it has had a divine spark, or something special inside all along. It is said whenever we act in compassionate or creative ways, we are the reflections of God’s goodness on earth. Ask your families to keep a journal of their children’s unique reflections of their inner spark. They might create a book of anecdotes and photos. Consider holding a “Divine Spark” *Kabbalat Shabbat* at school, and invite families to share stories about their unique child.



Share

 your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... that we can add to all year long

One of the beautiful things about *The Apple Tree’s Discovery* is that it takes place over the course of a year. What story might you begin with your class that grows with the children each week or month? Brainstorm with the children and families. Titles might include *Things We’ve Learned to Do* –or– *Our Secret Stars*. Let us know what you dream up.

Share with all of us on our private Facebook group page! <http://pjfor.me/pjgts-facebook>

More

 resources and websites for inspiration

Teaching children patience: <http://www.education.com/reference/article/teaching-kids-patience/>

Great information about children and nature: <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>

Treating everyone as a *Tzelem Elokim*: <http://tinyurl.com/MyJewishLearning-image>

