

## Read the PJ Library Book

### The Mystery Bear (4's)

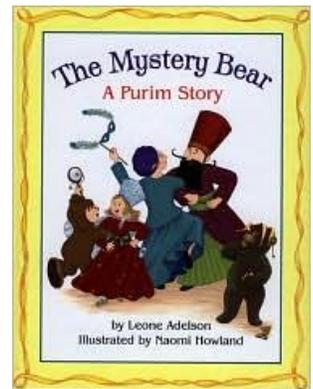
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#### Synopsis

Little Bear wakes up early from his winter slumber with a grumbly tummy and decides to set off to find food. He follows his nose right into a Purim celebration. The bear happily fills himself with Purim treats, and because everyone is in costume he fits right in. No one can figure out who is hidden in the life-like costume. One boy, Itzik, begins to suspect they have a real bear in their midst. He bravely warns his family and friends. What do you think happens when they try to wake the sleepy bear? Don't try this at home!



## Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Looking past the surface (Don't look at the jug) -

*Al tistakeil bakankan* - אל תסתכל בקנקן

Courage - *Ometz lev* - אִמְץ לֵב

Responsibility for one another -

*Kol yisrael aravim zeh bazeh* - כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲרָבִים זֶה בָּה זֶה

**Looking past the surface (Don't look at the jug) - *Al tistakeil bakankan*.** The importance of seeing things from a deeper, internal perspective is a core Jewish value. Pirkei Avot (Ethics of our Ancestors) says: "Do not look at the jug, but what is in it." (4:27) This *mishna* (Hebrew for teaching or lesson) guards us against looking merely at external features, because things are not always what they seem. Pirkei Avot guides us to take the time to investigate and ask questions. Part of Purim tradition is to look for things that are hidden. This is one reason for dressing in costume. The Story of Esther read on Purim doesn't mention God's name, though the saving of the Jewish people is attributed to God. Looking for what is concealed might be a helpful concept to focus on if children are frightened by masks or costumes.

**Courage – Ometz lev.** The literal translation for the Hebrew phrase is strength of heart. Though *ometz-lev* often refers to acts of courage, ancient rabbis understood that the ability to take action comes from the inner strength to overcome fear or apprehension. Pirkei Avot (see previous paragraph) consistently teaches us to pay attention to inner qualities: “Who is strong? The one who controls his inclinations.” (4:1) In *The Mystery Bear* Little Bear illustrates *ometz-lev* when he makes the decision to find his own food. Itzik demonstrates *ometz-lev* by voicing his suspicions about the bear. At Purim we celebrate Esther’s bravery. She overcomes her fear of approaching the king in order to save her people.

**Responsibility for one another – Kol yisrael aravim zeh bazeh.** There are four *mitzvot* (plural of *mitzvah*, commandment) associated with Purim, and in some ways they are all related to taking care of one another. The first mitzvah is listening to the *Megillah*, the Book of Esther, which is read from a scroll. This is an inspirational story of bravery and determination to save the Jewish people. The second mitzvah is *Mishloach Manot* – sending gifts. Purim is a time for merriment, thus further foiling the plans of the villain, Haman. Giving gifts of food to friends and colleagues ensures that everyone has the means to be happy. Related to this is the mitzvah of *Matanot La'evyonim* - gifts to the poor. This act of *tzedakah* can be monetary or in the form of food, so the needy may have cause to celebrate. The fourth mitzvah is the *Seudah*, the Purim feast. This is the culmination of the holiday, designed to truly enact the phrase “eat, drink, and be merry.” Though these mitzvot are specific to Purim, they are consistent with the year-round teachings of *tzedakah*.

## Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

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

### In the Classroom / Centers

- ✧ **Looking past the surface:** Place different types of containers as a provocation on a **display table**. Place unexpected items in the boxes. For example, put stones in an egg carton, pretzels in a crayon box, or feathers in a coffee tin. Alternate the objects to stimulate ongoing curiosity. Play guessing games by shaking the box or asking questions.
- ✧ **Looking past the surface:** Put a large mirror along with masks and costumes in the **dramatic play area**. You might make a “guess who” game in the **puzzle corner** using photographs of your students with removable masks.
- ✧ **Courage:** For a four-year-old trying new skills, verbalizing feelings, or admitting mistakes are acts of courage. Help children recognize this courage in themselves and others. Say *Kol Hakavod* (all the honor) for something well done.
- ✧ **Responsibility for one another:** Before making *mishloach manot* baskets this year, have a discussion during **morning meeting** about the many people in addition to parents who take care of us. Include school staff, doctors and supermarket employees. Decide who you will give baskets to this year.
- ✧ **Responsibility for one another:** Declare a Take-Care-of-Others day in school. Encourage the children to help a classmate with their coat, clean-up, or snack.



## Bridging Home and School



### **A Tisket, A Tasket, Make Shalach Manot Baskets!**

Invite families to make easily assembled *shalach manot* baskets at school. (*Shalach manot* is another way to say *mishloach manot*.) This could be an afternoon, evening, or a before-school activity. Have baskets, ribbon, and tissue paper handy. Baskets can be made from any container, such as a shoe box, plastic strawberry crate from the supermarket, or stapled paper plates.

You may decide to ask families to donate fruit or other healthy snacks. School or synagogue administration can join in the fun. Decide together where the baskets will go - a local senior center, your maintenance staff, or another place of your choosing.

### **Badge of Courage**

The Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz* didn't realize he was brave until he received a medal. Young children might also benefit from a physical representation of their courage. Create a series of badges to share with families. Perhaps parents will help fashion badges or recommend categories of awards such as helping a friend or tasting a new food. Ask families to share stories of these acts of bravery.

## Family Engagement at Home

### **Taking care of others – with books!**

The mitzvah of *Matanot La'evyonim*, giving gifts to the poor, can take many forms. Many people give monetary gifts to needy people or organizations. A lovely way for families to include children in fulfilling this mitzvah is to donate gently used items to distribution centers that help disadvantaged families. Suggest your school families look through their shelves for duplicate or outgrown books, art supplies, or toys to send to a homeless shelter or other facility.

# Share

 your stories and experiences with everyone.

**What happened?**

**How can the learning go deeper?**

### **Tell us a story... of bravery**

Create a classroom megillah (scroll) of collected stories of bravery. Each segment could be one child's example of courage. For example: *Katie was usually shy at morning meeting. Talking in front of a group can be a hard thing to do. But today Katie has an important tale to tell about her new baby brother, and we heard every word. Kol Hakavod, Katie!*

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

# More

 resources and websites for inspiration

Courage: [pjfor.me/OmetzLev](http://pjfor.me/OmetzLev)

Baskets: <http://judaism.about.com/od/holidays/a/How-To-Make-Mishloach-Manot-For-Purim.htm>

Fun Purim Video: <http://tinyurl.com/YouTubeMaccabeatsPurim>

