

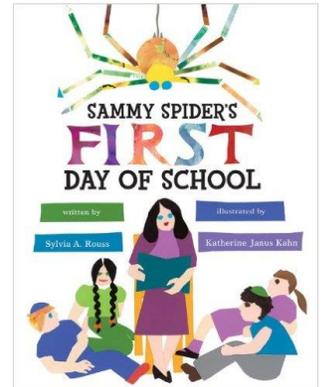
# Read the PJ Library Book

## Sammy Spider's First Day of School (4s)

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### Synopsis

Sammy watches Josh prepare for school, and he wants to go too! Sammy stows away in Josh's backpack for the journey. While at school Josh's class listens to the story of Noah's Ark. The students talk about how to take care of animals, an important Jewish value. Yet when the children discover Sammy Spider in their classroom, their fear gets the best of them. Luckily, Josh intercedes. With the help of their teacher, the students realize that kindness to animals extends to all creatures, and Sammy remains safe.

## Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Kindness to animals - *Tza-ar ba-a-lei cha-yim* - צַעַר בְּעֵלֵי חַיִּים

Courage - *Ometz lev* - אִמְץ לֵב

### Introducing the value of kindness to animals *Tz'ar ba'alei chayim*

#### From Jewish teachings

*Tza-ar ba-a-lei chayim* literally means "the suffering of living creatures," but we take it to mean that we should do our best to avoid cruel treatment of animals. Jewish tradition takes this seriously; even animals are supposed to get a break on Shabbat. Animals play a prominent role in many of the stories in the Torah. Jewish tradition values animals so much that according to Deuteronomy 5:4, we are told to feed our animals before we feed ourselves.

#### For the teacher

What is your relationship to pets and animals in general?  
How did your relationship to animals develop?  
How do you think humankind's evolving relationship with animals has impacted the many laws governing our interactions with them, both in the Torah and in modern life?



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#### Questions for children

Where are the many places we might find animals?  
What do we need to do to take care of animals and their habitats?  
Tell us about how you can help the animals that you see.  
For those who have pets at home, do you feed them? Walk them?  
How do animals help people?

**Introducing the value of courage**  
**Ometz lev**

**From Jewish teachings**

The literal translation for the Hebrew phrase *ometz lev* is “strength of heart.” Though *ometz lev* often refers to physical acts of courage, the ancient rabbis understood that the ability to take action comes from our inner strength to overcome fear or apprehension. Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, a prominent Hasidic Rabbi of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, taught that “the whole world is a very narrow bridge and the most important part is not to be afraid.” How do we muster courage in the face of fear?

**For the teacher**

Consider the times that you have been afraid and overcame fear. How is your courage in the face of obstacles reflected in your classroom? Many of us are hesitant to show our whole selves in the classroom. How can we bring our authentic selves to work and harness our strengths and weaknesses to enhance our teaching and learning?

**Questions for children**

Can you tell us about a time when you were afraid? Try to remember what you were thinking and feeling. How did your body feel different? How did you get through being scared? How can you help a friend who is feeling scared?



# Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

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

**In the Classroom / Centers**



☆ **Kindness to animals / *tza-ar ba'alei chayim***: Take a survey of which students have pets and what kind of pets they have. As a **math activity**, engage your class in making a visual graph of their answers. Ask questions such as, “Who has the most pets?” “Do the students in our class have more dogs or cats?”

☆ **Kindness to Animals / *tza-ar ba'alei chayim***: Invite a local farmer or veterinarian into your class to talk about how we take care of animals. Change your **science center** into an animal studies area that the children can use for research as they’re exploring this value. Supply books, photographs, skins, feathers, etc.

☆ **Courage / *ometz lev***: Give the children opportunities for new experiences, such as meeting new people or tasting different foods. As the children try new things, introduce the **Hebrew** phrase “*Kol ha kavod*” (literally all the honor) as a way for students to encourage and congratulate one another as they test new waters.

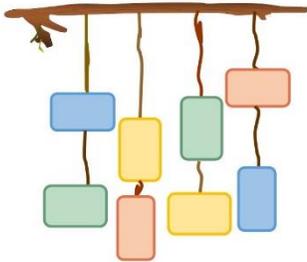
☆ **Courage / *ometz lev***: Children are often tentative in learning new things because they are unsure of the outcome. You can help them build confidence through **scaffolding the skills** needed to master a new task. For example, to learn how to hop on one foot first you need to master balancing and standing on one foot. Then you must gain the strength to lift your whole body with just one leg. Have a discussion with your students about breaking down tasks into manageable steps.



## Bridging Home and School

### Family Fun on the Farm

Send home a list of local farms and encourage families to visit. Consider sending home a checklist of things to observe, such as the animals' different types of shelters and what types of foods they eat. Ask families to take pictures that you can display back in class.



### Mobile Memento

Set up a small box with index cards and pens at the entrance to your classroom. Ask parents to share when their children are trying something new. As you collect the cards, read the children's accomplishments aloud. With your students' help, create a simple mobile using the cards and watch how it grows over the course of the year. (This type of mobile makes a great room divider.)

## Family Engagement at Home

### Real Resilience

Research shows that children who hear about how their families have faced adversity build resilience (see article below). Encourage families to tell stories to their children about challenging times, and how they overcame their obstacles. Recommend to families that they acknowledge when their children are having a hard time and overcoming an obstacle. Recognizing their struggles helps to validate the child's feelings, and will help children regulate their emotions.

# Share your stories and experiences with everyone.

**What happened?**

**How can the learning go deeper?**

### Tell us a story... about overcoming fear

Fear comes from the unknown. Show how your class exploration of insects has changed your children's attitudes towards something they previously may have feared. For example: *Last week Loretta found a spider. "What should we do with it?" she asked. The children decided together to capture it in a cup and bring it outside. Maybe our class would have chosen a different solution earlier in the year, but now that we have learned so much about spiders we are no longer afraid of them.*

Read this aloud to your class to highlight your students' emerging bravery.



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# More resources and websites for inspiration

An article about resilience: [Pjfor.me/on-family-resilience](http://Pjfor.me/on-family-resilience)

More on Courage: [Pjfor.me/more-on-ometz-lez](http://Pjfor.me/more-on-ometz-lez)

More on Kindness to Animals: [Pjfor.me/more-on-kindness-to-animals](http://Pjfor.me/more-on-kindness-to-animals)

