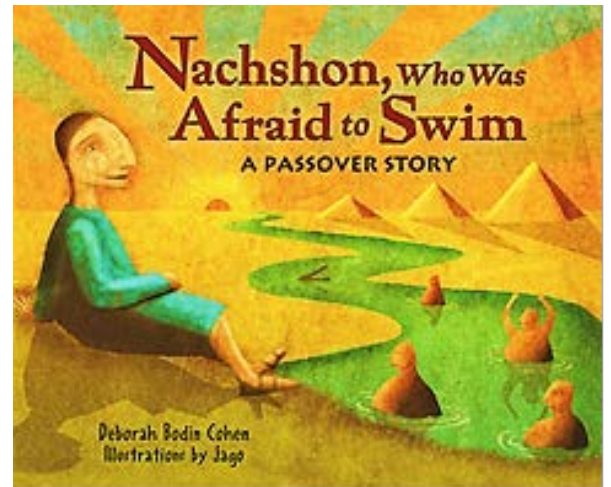


Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim

By Deborah Bodin Cohen

Program Focus

Age group: Ages 5-7
 Time frame: 60-90 minutes
 Central value: Courageous leadership (*Ometz Lev*)



Synopsis

This book highlights an unusual leader; someone who was willing to take a literal leap of faith. Nachshon led by being willing to do what others were not. Many children long to try new things, but at the same time, they are fearful. This book reassures that a “leap” can be a step of courage. Though the book speaks about God, it speaks of faith as trusting in God *and* trusting in oneself, which is language a primary aged child can understand (especially with the concrete example given in the story). The book can be read before Passover, but is also one that can be used at any time of year a story of courage is appropriate.

Goals

- Highlight and connect the major themes of this book to daily life
- Involve families in a project to continue to engage in Jewish living at home
- Note times when your child displays faith and tries something new
- To share stories of struggles and leaps of faith

Submitted by

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Plan in advance

Prepare Stories of Strength and Courage

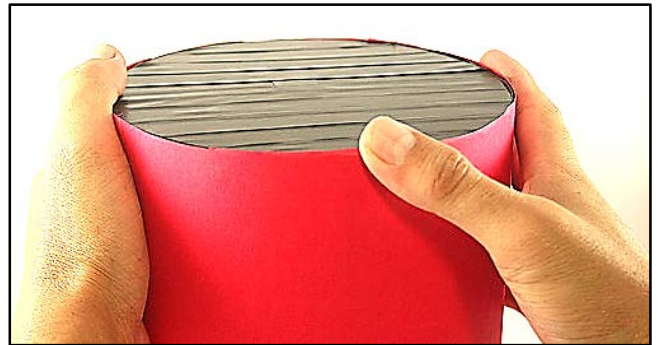
Materials

- Sheet of drawing paper, pencil, and crayons for each child and parent
- A large sheet with the phrase “*Be strong and of a good courage*”
 - Hang large sheet on a wall with space for additional papers to be added around it
- 8 ½ x 11” copies of “*Be strong and of a good courage*” sheet with the additional questions and directions (see attached)
- Poster putty or painter’s tape (to hang participants’ art work around the text)
- Additional PJ books available for families to read together if they finish the project sooner

Prepare Drums

Materials

- Assorted coffee cans, quart sized yogurt containers, cocoa tins, etc.
- Construction paper of a size that can wrap around the cans
- Masking or packing tape
- Scissors
- Crayons or markers
- Paper glue
- Sample of completed drum



Introduce with activities

Share Stories of Strength and Courage

Introduction

- Point out the text on the wall and share that the words “be strong and of good courage” are from the Torah:
- In Deuteronomy 31:7 God told Moses to tell Joshua “*Be strong and of a good courage*” as he was charged to be the next leader of the Jewish people; the leader that would help them to settle in the land of Israel after years of wandering.
- Point out the quote and directions on the table. Ask parents to help children think, and children to help parents think, of a time they were strong and had courage. Then, draw and write a bit about it.

Engagement

As you have time, wander and chat with people about what they have done; prompt with questions if people are struggling, such as:

- Did they learn to swim even if they were a bit scared?
- Did they teach someone how to do something?
- Did they give a presentation (again, teaching people) or take part in a play even though it made them nervous to be in front of people like that?

If folks come in too late to finish this, encourage them to think about the question and be ready to share; suggest they can complete the picture later or at home.

Closing

As families finish they can hang their stories around the text on the wall.

Adaptations for Group Size and Age

Larger Groups

- Have families share their stories at the tables before hanging them up
- Consider having families create one picture & story together

Younger Children

- May need more prompting from parents and will need parents to write sentences

**BE STRONG AND OF
GOOD COURAGE**

Read the story

Transition

Invite all to come and join you. Ideally, you can have space under or near the “*Be strong and of good courage*” text for all to sit. Ask them to bring their pictures to share. If the group is very large, ask them to introduce themselves to each other and share what they drew and wrote about at their tables before they came to join you. As everyone settles in, welcome all. Have families briefly introduce themselves and share, in a sentence or two, each of their pictures. One family member can stand and point out their picture on the wall.

Briefly explain that the stories the families just shared help to make words that were said a long time ago, words from the Torah, relevant to today. Even though those words were written thousands of years ago, the stories are one way of showing the lessons of Torah still have meaning for our lives today.

Go on to explain that Rabbis and Jewish teachers connect stories to the Torah, too. Many times when they’re writing a *D’var Torah* or sermon, they start with the words in the Torah and then connect them to a story in their own life or the lives of others today.

Rabbis did that a long time ago, too. They tried to understand the Torah by thinking about their lives. Also, when they weren’t quite sure exactly how something in the Torah happened, they created stories to help explain what might have happened. Those stories are called *midrash*. Today’s story is a *midrash*; telling the story of a boy who just might have helped the Red Sea to part when the Jewish people, who had been slaves in the land of Egypt, were trying to get beyond the sea to be free people.



Encourage Participation

As you read, encourage active movement as the book described if you see that the children are restless. They can:

- With great effort, pound straw and mud into bricks, for instance
- Make the sounds of horses by slapping hands on their thighs
- Cheer for freedom

Upon finishing, you might want to ask the children and parents:

- What they liked best about the story?
- How was Nachshon a leader?
- Was he *strong and of good courage*? If yes, how?

Adaptations for Group Size and Age

Larger Groups

Stand if needed to show all the pictures in the story; have parents help gather snacks.

Younger Children

Be sure to plan to engage them in appropriate movements to enhance their experience and keep them engaged (see above).

Follow Up activities and resources

Make Drums

Intro Words

(Before families head back to their tables) *Just like Nachshon, sometimes we need to take a risk and try something new, something we might not have thought we could do. We are going to do that very soon, but first we need to make something to help us. We will make drums!*

Directions

1. Each participant (both parents and children) should choose a container
2. Using the tape provided, they should cover the opening at the top with overlapping strips of tape, being sure that they have no spaces in between the strips
3. Measure and cut a piece of construction paper to wrap around the body of the can with enough overlap to be able to glue it in place once it is decorated.
4. Decorate the paper, and then glue it around the can.

Be a Drum Leader

Intro Words

For many of you, this might be a day where you are taking a risk as a leader. Many of us are very used to leading with our words. This activity will stretch us as well as our participants, and it is something worth sharing with them as part of the wrap up of the program. As you start leading without a sound, you will likely be a courageous leader!



Directions

1. With the beating of your drum to call everyone to attention and then a marching beat and signal of your hand, draw everyone to march and sit in a circle.
2. Hold your hand up for silence.
3. Beat a simple rhythm, and then just with hand motions, invite all to join you so that everyone is beating in unison.
4. Get fancy. Stop everyone, and then, with hand signals, divide the group in half. Model and then have ½ join you in a basic rhythm. Then, while they continue, model and have the other half do a variation that compliments the initial rhythm.
5. Silence all and then motion a parent to come up and (ideally continuing without speaking) invite him/her to play a brief pattern of beats. Then invite all to follow his/her model a few times to make music.
6. Send that person back to sit down and then bring up one of the older, more eager looking children to do the same.
7. Continue in this fashion until many (or all if it is a small group) have had a turn.
8. End with a “drumroll of beats” by all and then take a minute or so to give praises to this group of great leaders and terrific drummers!
9. Talk about how leadership is about doing, not just using words to tell others what to do.

Resources for parents, teachers, families

Nurturing the Family

Courage Award

- As a closing activity, provide each participant with an award for “Courageous Leadership” (see one idea attached) citing their willingness to step up and lead all in drumming.
- You can immediately encourage them to fill in a second space with a word or two to the story they shared at the beginning of the program.
- Encourage parents and children alike to recognize future moments of leadership by adding more stars and notations to the award.
- Make sure families take down their pictures from the beginning of the program

Read More about Courage and Children

Courageous Children and the Value of Ometz Lev – PJ Blog Post

<http://pjlibrary.org/pj-blog/index.php/archives/4094/courageous-children-the-value-of-ometz-lev/>

חזק ואמץ

Hazak v'ematz

**Be strong
and of good courage**

Devarim 31:7

When have you been strong and of good courage?

When have you done something that you were scared to do?

When have you led others?

Draw a picture and write a sentence or two to tell your story.

Parents can share their stories, too!

חזק ואמץ

Hazak v'ematz

Leading a
group without
saying a word

