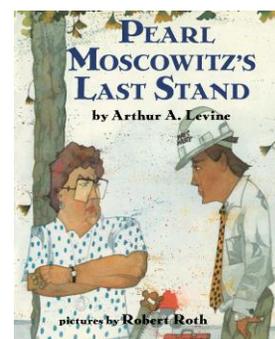


Pearl Moscowitz's Last Stand

By Arthur A. Levine

Illustrated by Robert Roth

Published by HarperCollins Children's Books



On one foot: This book is a wonderful introduction to the complexities of pursuing social justice. The story touches on some challenging concepts, such as poverty, urban renewal, activism, and civil disobedience. Appreciating multiculturalism while maintaining one's identity is a prominent theme.

Highlighted Jewish Values:

Preventing waste/not destroying

Bal tashchit - בַּל תַּשְׁחִית

Community

Kehilla - קהילה

Connection to *shmita*

Two of the modern interpretations of *shmita* are taking care of natural resources, such as trees, and fighting for social justice. In this book, Pearl and her neighbors exhibit mutual respect for one another as they work together to protect a favorite tree.

Optional preparation for reading the story:

Print before-and-after photographs of places, such as forests with fire damage or neighborhoods that have undergone urban renewal. See our Pinterest board for ideas:

<http://www.pinterest.com/pjgts/pearl-moscowitzs-last-stand/>

Before You Read

Jewish Values and Background Information

Preventing waste/not destroying

Three aspects of this value to consider

- We can learn to appreciate and use what we already have, whether from the natural world or manufactured
- Each person can make a difference (there is no such thing as a small mitzvah)
- Consider wise use of effort, time, opportunity, or words

The concept of protecting the earth comes from the warning that during a wartime siege of a city, “you shall not destroy (*lo tashchit*) its trees by forcing an ax against them; for you may eat of them...” [Deuteronomy 20:19]. The concept expanded to include a ban against destroying anything that might still have some use or purpose. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, a nineteenth-century leader of the Jewish Orthodox movement, wrote in his book of Jewish philosophy, *Horeb*, “Regard things as God's property and use them with a sense of responsibility for wise human purposes. Destroy nothing! Waste nothing!”

Community

Three aspects of this value to consider:

- We encounter a diversity of culture in neighborhoods, schools, and extracurricular activities.
- Communities continuously change and evolve.
- We can maintain Jewish identity while participating in community life.

Brad Artson, a contemporary American rabbi and scholar, teaches that community is the core of Jewish Identity. He believes that the laws of the Torah help us maintain the structure and strength of that community. Much of Jewish law focuses on the avoidance of disputes and the concentration on compassionate behavior with our neighbors and friends. Hillel warns us in *Pirkei Avot (Ethics of our Ancestors)*, “Do not separate yourself from the community, and do not believe [only] in yourself until the day of your death...” [2:5] Rabbis Hillel and Artson both understand that humans are social beings, and we need a community structure within which to grow and evolve into the people we are meant to be.

When You Read

Introducing the story and engaging children

Set the stage with questions

What does “taking a stand” mean?

Look at the faces and the way the characters on the front cover are standing. How do you think these characters feel about one another?

Look at the leaves of the tree on the front cover. What type of tree do you think this is?

Choose a storytelling technique or provocation (optional)

1. Snap shot – as you read the story have the students act out a segment of the story, such as the neighbors sipping lemonade, playing cards, or distracting the utility worker. In the height of their enactment say “click,” or “freeze.” You might take a real photo with your phone.

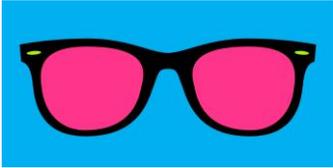
2. Choose one or two sets of before-and-after photographs. Explain that these photographs show that a picture was taken, something happened, and sometime later the second photo was taken. For example, you might have your picture taken before a haircut and after a haircut. Ask children which of the two photos in the set came before and which photo came after. What was the thing that happened between the two photographs? Have the children think about how the photos relate to the story they will hear.

After You Read

Making connections and making it personal

Preventing waste/not destroying	Community
Discuss	Discuss
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why was the tree in the book so important to Pearl? • Why is it important to try to prevent trees from being cut down? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pearl was a good neighbor – what are the qualities that make a good neighbor and a good neighborhood? • What are some of the things that Pearl does in order to protect the tree?



<p>Preventing waste/not destroying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think of your neighborhood. What things in your neighborhood should be saved and not destroyed? • Are there things in your house or classroom that are frequently thrown away but could be saved instead? What could you do with some of the trash in your house or classroom rather than throwing it away? 	<p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the ways in which Pearl's neighbors work together as a team/community? • Do the people in your neighborhood or school ever work together on a project? What types of projects do they undertake? • How should people act and what rules should they follow when they try to work together? • What Pearl did is called social action. Is there a social action committee in your synagogue or school? What do they do?
<p>Activities</p> <p>One person's trash is another's treasure: Set up an object swap in your classroom. Ask children (and families) to send in one item no longer of interest to them. Let the trading begin!</p>  <p>On the ball: Blow up a plastic beach ball. Add words and pictures with marker or stickers that represent commonly wasted items, such as plastic bottles, food, paper, electricity, or fuel. Toss the ball. Wherever one's thumb lands when the ball is caught is the subject of the following challenge: name one way to reuse/reduce/recycle that object.</p> <p>Protect your environment: Take a walk (inside or outside) with your students, and brainstorm ways in which you can improve your school environment. You might decide to create "unplug" signs for the computer room, clean up trash on the lawn, or find an area of the building that can use a recycling bin.</p>	<p>Activities</p> <p>Inquiring minds want to know: Turn your class into cub reporters and interview people (perhaps on video) around your synagogue or school. Ask them what types of community projects your organization should be taking on. Perhaps the children will want to implement one of the suggested projects.</p> <p>Every person in a community is important: Adopt the habit of acknowledging absent students by creating "We missed you!" cards. This can be an elaborate art project, or have prewritten cards onto which the students can attach stickers. You can even make stickers with the students' photos on them.</p> <p>What's in a name: Walk around your building and note which spaces bear someone's name. Research who these people are, and why they have a room named for them.</p>
<p>Taking it home – preventing waste</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the things you already do to prevent waste (reduce, reuse, recycle); what else can you do? • Is one of your parents a gardener or composter? Invite an "expert" parent to talk to the class about trees, gardening, or composting. 	<p>Taking it home – community</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask family members (especially grandparents) about changes they have observed in their neighborhood.

