

Read the PJ Library Book

Sadie and the Big Mountain (4s)

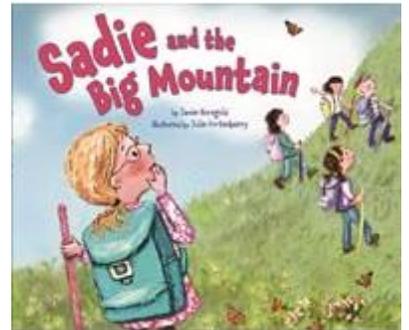
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Synopsis

Sadie becomes very nervous when she learns that her class intends to hike to the top of a mountain for a Shavuot celebration. Sadie hates hiking, and she is afraid she will never make it to the top. With calm assurance from Rabbi Jamie, Sadie overcomes her fears and marches triumphantly up the not-so-tall mountain after all.



Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Courage / *O-metz lev* - אִמְץ לֵב

Shavuot, Feast of Weeks / *Sha-vu-ot* - שְׁבוּעוֹת

Introducing the value of courage *Ometz lev*

From Jewish teachings

Ometz lev, the Hebrew phrase for courage, literally means strength of heart. Jewish sages throughout time have offered advice on how to act courageously. Chasidic leader Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav encouraged his followers to refrain from frightening themselves as they walked across the “narrow bridge” of life. Rav Kook, chief rabbi of pre-Israel Palestine, urged that people maintain perspective, since the likelihood of bad things occurring is quite small. Biblical heroes such as Moses, King David, and Queen Esther resorted to prayer, song, or fasting to bolster courage and strengthen their hearts.

For the teacher

- Think about times you were afraid, yet you acted despite your fears. What enabled you to take action? How might you incorporate personal stories of courage into your classroom?
- Courage comes in many forms, such as trying new things or standing up for one’s beliefs. What types of courage do the children in your class display?
- How can you help children recognize or find courage?

Questions for children

- Can you describe a time when you were afraid? Was there someone who helped you be less fearful?
- How would you help someone who was feeling afraid? Have you ever done that?
- Give an example of something that frightened you when you were younger that no longer bothers you, such as going down a slide.
- Can you tell us about someone you think is very brave?



Introducing the holiday of Shavuot

From Jewish teachings

Shavuot means weeks in Hebrew, as the holiday occurs exactly seven weeks after Passover. It is widely known as *z'man matan Torah*, the time of the giving of the Torah, when Moses received the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. Legend says the mountain bloomed as Moses climbed the mountain. The weeks leading up to Shavuot are a sort of spiritual journey, during which many Jewish people spend extra time learning Torah. For more about Shavuot, [click here](#).

For the teacher

- What do you think are important steps of a spiritual journey?
- For centuries the Torah was primarily an oral tradition, its values passed from generation to generation through telling stories. What are the benefits of an oral tradition? What are the detriments?
- What do you think children should know about Torah and learning in general?

Questions for children

- On Shavuot Moses climbed Mount Sinai while the Israelites waited. How do you think everyone felt waiting for Moses to come back?
- How would you prepare for a very special day or time?
- Shavuot is a celebration of Torah and learning. How can we think about all the things we learned together this year in school?



Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

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

In the Classroom / Centers

- ☆ **Ometz lev/courage:** Courage can mean trying new things. Encourage your students to try new foods at **snack time** (after researching allergies), such as jackfruit or jicama. Have a well-liked food nearby to cleanse the palate after a new taste. Teach the children a polite negative response, such as “This food is not to my liking.”



- ☆ **Ometz lev/courage:** Set up an obstacle course in the playground so children can show feats of bravery. Obstacles can include jumping, sliding, or even getting hands dirty. Pair children together who can help one another with being brave in certain tasks.
- ☆ **Shavuot:** Write your classroom’s *Big Book of Learning* as a central focus for a celebration of learning. Use poster boards as the pages. Go back through your year and see what children remember from holidays or explorations. Pair children together to create each page.

- ☆ **Shavuot:** There is a custom of staying up all night before Shavuot to study Torah and tell Torah stories. This is called a *Tikkun leil Shavuot*. Recreate this by having a daytime pajama party in your classroom. You might decorate by hanging stars and a moon from the ceiling. Spend the day reading books and telling stories (PJ Library books are perfect for this!). Don’t forget a delicious dairy snack.



Bridging Home and School

Decorate with flowers

It is customary to decorate homes and synagogues with flowers and greenery for Shavuot. Have a flower-making station in your lobby, and invite families to make flowers for the school or their home.

Click [here](#) for ideas.

Wall of courage / learning

Start a mural in your entranceway or hallway entitled “What make you brave?” or “Books I read and what I learned.” Have post-its and crayons on hand so families can write down book titles or draw pictures about courage and knowledge.



Photo from buggandbuddy.com

Family Engagement at Home

Milk and honey



Eating dairy foods at Shavuot time has almost as many explanations as there are recipes. It may be because the Torah is described as being like “milk and honey under one’s tongue” (Song of Songs 4:11). Some say it is because spiritual enlightenment should make us feel lighter, so it is customary to eat lighter, dairy foods (Does cheesecake make anyone feel lighter?). Send your families some [simple dairy recipes](#) to try at home, or ask them to create a dairy recipe that makes everyone feel sweet and light.

Share your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... about children reflecting on their own learning.

Many of us tell stories about what children are learning. It is just as important to read those stories back to the children so they have an opportunity to reflect on what and how they learned. Take an opportunity to find a piece of documentation from a month or more ago and bring it to small groups of children. Ask them to comment on what they learned, and what ideas they might add now.

More resources and websites for inspiration

Recipes: <https://pjlibrary.org/Beyond-Books/PJBlog/June-2016/Shavuot-Recipes>

Children and courage: <http://www.heysigmund.com/building-courage-in-kids/>

More about Shavuot: <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shavuot-101/>

