

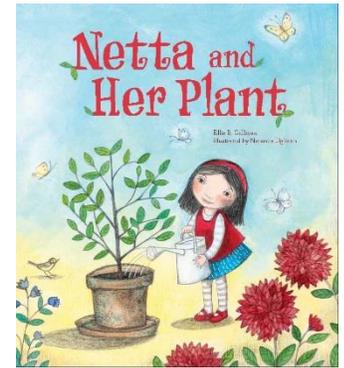
Read the PJ Library Book

Netta and Her Plant (4s)

By Ellie B. Gellman

Illustrated by Natascia Ugliano

Published by Kar-Ben Publishing



Synopsis

Netta goes to school on Tu B'Shevat, the birthday of the trees, and the teacher helps each child to plant a sapling in honor of the holiday. Netta learns that her name means “plant,” and she adores her little plant. The responsibility of caring for and nurturing her plant teaches Netta many life lessons. Netta and her plant grow alongside one another, each helping the other mature.

Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Care of the Earth - *Shmi-rat ha-a-da-mah* - שמירת האדמה

Responsibility - *Ach-ra-yut* - אחריות

Introducing the value of caring for the Earth

Shmirat ha'adamah

From Jewish teachings

According to Jewish tradition, part of humankind's purpose is to take care of the world in which we live. The first chapter of the Torah says God created man to “have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the Earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26). Jewish sages explain that along with the gift of human intelligence comes the responsibility to preserve the Earth's resources.

For the teacher

- In your classroom, how do you personally model caring for the Earth?
- Can you think of new classroom routines that might increase your students' interest in caring for the Earth?
- How can you include families in



your classroom's efforts to care for the environment?

Questions for children

- How does Netta help the environment when she plants her tree in the school yard?
- What things do we do in our classroom that help take care of the environment? What can you do at home that helps the Earth?
- Why is it important to take care of the world? What might happen if people forget to care for the Earth?

Introducing the value of responsibility *Achrayut*

<p>From Jewish teachings Responsibility is an important character trait to develop. Practicing Judaism involves taking on personal and communal responsibilities. The word for responsibility in Hebrew, <i>achrayut</i>, comes from the root for two different words: <i>ach</i> (brother) and <i>acher</i> (other). In Judaism, individuals are expected to treat one another with care, behaving as if we were all brothers and sisters. This responsibility extends to showing respect for property.</p>	<p>For the teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do we gain when we take responsibility for others? • How do you balance the need to be responsible to yourself with the need to be responsible to others and the community? • What do you view as your students' most important responsibilities in your classroom? • How do your children's classroom responsibilities change as the year progresses? 	<p>Questions for children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of Netta's responsibilities is taking care of her plant. How does she do that? • Describe some of your responsibilities. For example, how do you take care of yourself, your family, your friends, and your things? • What can you do now to help take care of yourself or your family that you couldn't do last year when you were just three years old?
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classroom responsibilities change as the year progresses?

Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

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

In the Classroom / Centers

- ☆ **Shmirat ha'adamah/care of the Earth:** A first step in caring for the Earth is to instill a love of the Earth. Provide books and photos of your local flora and fauna (plants and animals) in your **science center**. Take a **nature walk** and see which of the plants you encounter children can identify.
- ☆ **Shmirat ha'adamah/care of the Earth: Adopt a tree** on your school property or start a small **garden**. If there is a botanical garden in your area, invite their arborist or other tree specialist to your classroom to share tree knowledge with the children. Help the children understand what the tree or plants need to thrive. Will they need shade or sun? Mulch? A lot or a little water? Chart the change of your plants throughout the seasons.
- ☆ **Achrayut/responsibility:** Giving children the responsibility to take care of the classroom is a sign of respect. It shows the children you believe they are capable of the tasks you assign them, such as keeping the **block corner** neat and organized, pouring their own drinks and wiping up spills at **snack time**, or neatly hanging up clothes in the **dramatic play area**. Children have a way of surprising us as they step up to accept responsibilities!
- ☆ **Achrayut/responsibility:** Grow your collection of tools that children can use to help care for the classroom. At various points in the year, introduce a new tool - such as a feather duster, watering can, table crumb sweeper, or spray bottles (filled with child safe cleaners such as vinegar. Be sure to demonstrate how the tool works, where it is to be kept, and how to care for it. Create new classroom jobs that involve using the new tool to care for the classroom or playground.



Engage the families in your community

How can you involve families and deepen home-school relationships?

Cleaning Hall of Fame

Decorate a school wall with photos depicting your students taking on classroom responsibilities. Include shots of children cleaning up spills, straightening the bookshelf, organizing the blocks, or watering plants. Encourage families to contribute photos or notes describing chores their children do at home.

Planting Seeds

Set up a seed-planting station in your school entrance-way. Stock the station with sprout-able beans, cotton balls, spray bottles, and sandwich baggies. Instruct families to moisten cotton balls and drop them into a baggie, then place seeds between the side of the baggie and the cotton balls. Encourage families to tape the baggie to a window for maximum sun and easy viewing. Once the seed has grown roots and a stem (which happens in a few days), the seedling can be planted in soil. Consider sending families home with a baggie of planting soil and a cup or planter for replanting.



At Home

See below for a mini-newsletter about this book. Cut on the dotted line to send directly to parents, or copy any part for your website or electronic communication with families.



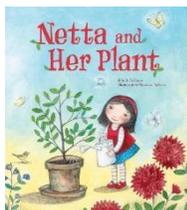
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On Tu B'Shevat, Netta brings a plant home from school. As the years pass, she cares lovingly for her plant, and the plant flourishes. Mirroring her plant, Netta too grows and thrives. She becomes taller, becomes a big sister, and takes on more and more responsibilities.



DO fun stuff at home

Amazing celery

Practice caring for plants by growing celery.

Chop off the base of the celery, leaving about two inches. (Eat the rest of the celery.)

Place the celery end in a dish of water on a windowsill.

In just a few days the center leaves begin to regrow.

After about three weeks of growth, replant your celery in soil and continue caring for it until the stalks have become large enough to eat and enjoy.



DISCUSS Jewish values

Caring for the Earth/Shmirat ha'adamah

Caring for the Earth and preserving the world's resources are two of the first responsibilities given to humans upon their creation.

- What are ways that our family already cares for the Earth? What else can we try?

Responsibility/achrayut

Judaism asks that we invest time and effort in caring for ourselves, others, and things.

- What important job or responsibility would you like to be in charge of that will help our family stay organized?

MORE resources

Growing celery:

<http://www.housingaforest.com/regrowing-celery/>

Rescue the Environment song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-3FoVe9Fjo>