

Values Curriculum:

Courage/Ometz Lev

OVERVIEW	This session explores the Jewish value of <i>Ometz Lev</i> /Courage. Through games and crafts, students consider what brings us courage and get to try out being brave.
OBJECTIVE	To practice courage and to talk about what makes us afraid and how we can bring courage to that.
VALUE(S)	<i>Ometz Lev (Courage)</i>
STORY	"Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim" by Deborah Bodin Cohen
MATERIALS	Superhero cuff supplies, rope and blindfold, heart materials
AT HOME CHALLENGE	Students will take hearts of courage home to remind them that they can face their fears with bravery. Families/ children are challenged to try something that feels scary or challenging as a way to build their courage.

Materials List

Activity One

- Long rope
- Blindfold

Activity Two

- Heart stencils (one for each 2 children)
- Pencils
- Construction paper
- Pairs of scissors
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Gathering Activity

- Empty toilet paper rolls (2 per child)
- Construction or other colored paper, pre-cut to fit around the toilet paper roll
- Pairs of scissors
- Glue sticks
- Markers
- Foam stickers

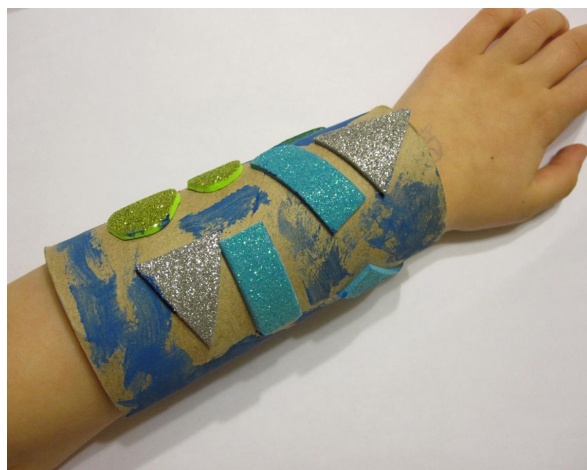
Opening/Closing Circle

- Book: “Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim” by Deborah Bodin Cohen
- Big pad of paper and markers
- At Home Challenge Sheet

Gathering Activity: Superhero Cuffs (15 Minutes)

Children will make superhero cuffs to cultivate their inner heroic bravery.

1. Gather children around a table with materials laid out.
2. Show children a sample of the superhero cuffs we are making. Notice together how it was constructed.
3. Demonstrate how to glue a pre-cut piece of colored paper on to the outside of a toilet paper roll.
4. Give each child 2 toilet paper rolls and have them choose their colored papers.
5. Have each child glue their paper to the outside of each of their toilet paper rolls.
6. Invite them to consider how they would like to decorate their cuffs and show them the available materials. Let them know that these are their superhero cuffs, not one for a character they know about; so they can decorate them however they choose.
7. Have each child decorate their cuffs by cutting out shapes and gluing them on, or drawing on them with markers, or applying the foam stickers, or any combination.
8. When each child is ready, help them cut a slit down the middle of each cuff and put them on.



Opening Circle (10 Minutes)

Gather everyone into a circle and begin with a melody, a niggun or a greeting song such as Hineh Ma Tov.

Tell about today's theme:

- Have the children hold up their superhero cuffs to show each other. Have children tell you a little bit about how they decorated their cuffs.
- Why do superheroes wear cuffs? (There's no answer for this but see what they say.) Why do superheroes wear costumes at all?
 - ◊ I wonder if superheroes wear costumes to remind them that they can be heroes.
- Today we are learning about something every superhero needs: Courage.
- What do we already know about Courage?

Introduce today's Hebrew words — *Ometz Lev*:

- Everyone hold up one hand and make an 'O' with the fingers on that hand and say, "Oh." Then bring that hand to your heart and say, "Metz." Put it together, "Oh-Metz." *Ometz* means dedication or commitment.
- Everyone hold your hands next your heart and use your thumbs and forefingers to make a heart shape. Say, "*Lev*." *Lev* means heart.
- *Ometz Lev* together makes the Hebrew word for courage.
- Put the whole thing together. An O to your heart, "*Ometz*" and a heart on your heart, "*Lev*."
- Courage requires the commitment of your heart.

Story (20 Minutes)

Introduce the Story — "Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim"

- Who can be a hero?
- What does it take to have courage or to be brave?
- The story we are going to read is about a person named Nachshon. Nachshon lived during the time when the Jews or Israelites were slaves in Egypt. He was there when Moses helped the Jewish people escape from Egypt. Nachshon wasn't the leader of the people like Moses was but he did something really brave that helped free the people. Let's find out what Nachshon did.

Read the Story. Ask some good Questions.

- **Check for Understanding**

- ◇ What was Nachshon afraid of?
- ◇ What did Moses tell Nachshon to help him?
- ◇ How did Nachshon's courage help save the Jewish people?

- **Get Curious**

- ◇ What are kids wondering about the story?
- ◇ Encourage kids to wonder about WHY something happened in the story, WHAT might happen next, or HOW someone did something.
- ◇ Record these questions on the big pad of paper.
- ◇ These questions don't have to have answers – though kids are welcome to try and answer each other's questions.
- ◇ Have kids respond to each other's questions with "good question!" and a thumbs up.

- **Give one more Question to Ponder**

- ◇ I'm wondering: Would the waters have parted if Nachshon hadn't gone into the sea?

10 Minute Break

Activity One: Trust & Courage Building Challenges (30 Minutes)

Children will play games to build up trust in each other and in themselves, giving them greater confidence in their physical and emotional capacity to face challenges. A big part of these challenges is for the group to offer cheering and support as children take on challenges.

Introduce the Activity:

Nachshon was really brave about many things but still afraid of some. It took real courage for him to face his deepest fears. Today we are going to practice building our courage through a series of challenges.

Challenge One: Trust Fall

1. Teach children how to stand in a way where they cannot be pushed over. Bring one foot back and bend your knees a bit so that your center of gravity is above your navel. Hold your hands in front of your chest to protect yourself. You can ask for a volunteer to stand normally and then stand in the stance you showed and try to topple them so they can understand the difference.

2. Ask for one person in the group to stand in front of you, the educator (with their back to you). Position yourself in a stable stance close to their body so that when they fall they quickly make contact with your hands and feel supported as they fall into you. Ask them to fall when you instruct them to do so (and only then) and support their weight with your hands and through your body.

Have you ever done that before? Was that scary?

What helped you let yourself fall? What made you feel safe?

3. Explain that now we will do a trust fall as a group, where one person will fall and the whole group will support them. This takes a lot of trust and a lot of responsibility, because each person must trust in their own body to support the volunteer in order for the group to succeed. Get everyone's consent before you do this as a group.
4. Stand closely in a circle so that everyone's shoulders are touching. Invite everyone to put their hands in front of their chest. Have one person in the group volunteer to fall. When you, and only YOU say so, the person in the middle falls and the group supports the person's weight and gently moves them toward the person next to them in the circle so that the person in the middle travels all the way around the circle, supported. Make sure to pass the person around slowly.
5. You can repeat the group trust fall for whomever wants to try falling as long as the whole group is being safe and is prepared.

Who needs courage in order for the trust fall to work?

What takes more courage: falling, or supporting a person?

Challenge Two: Blindfolded Walk on a Rope

The goal is for one child to walk along the rope blindfolded without touching down on the ground. Everyone in the group supports that person, either as spotters, or by cheering. This challenge is harder because the person walking along the rope is blindfolded and their weight is not being supported by anyone else. The activity is safe because the rope is on the ground and there is very little chance of falling.

1. Stretch out the rope in a long, straight line, for about 3 to 5 yards.
2. Ask for two volunteers to be spotters. Position one spotter on each side of the rope. Spotters follow the person along the rope in a stable stance, prepared to support the person should they fall.
3. Ask for one volunteer who is ready for the courage challenge. Blindfold them and help them put their feet on the starting place along the rope.
4. Check in with the spotters to make sure they are ready: "Spotters ready?" "Go!"
5. Everyone else cheers the person on!
6. Time permitting, see if another child or two wants to try this activity.

Challenge Three: Crossing the Sea (Running Through a Jump Rope)

One at a time, children will dodge a rope that is being turned like a jump rope and pass under it to the other side without being caught in it. This challenge is only fulfilled if the whole group does it successfully, for which everyone needs to support each other through cheering and through advising each other with helpful strategies.

Tips:

- Two adults can turn the rope together, or you can tie one end of the rope to a fence or pole and have only one adult turn the rope.
- Encourage children to strategize together. How will people know when it's their turn to go so that no more than one person goes at a time? How will people know when to run through so that they don't get caught in the rope?
- Pretend that they are the Israelites crossing the Sea of Reeds on their way to freedom. They must all have the courage necessary to cross to the other side!

Activity Two: Hearts of Courage (10 Minutes)

Children will make hearts of courage with a challenge they are working to overcome.

Introduce the activity:

The Jews in the story had a lot to be afraid of. All of us encounter things we are afraid of every day. Often we have to do those things anyway. Courage is what helps us face our fears, just like it helped Nachshon go into the water. We are going to think of the things in our lives for which we need courage.

1. Invite the children to think about something that makes them feel afraid.
2. While they are thinking, show them how to use the heart stencils to trace a heart on their construction paper.
3. Have each child take a piece of paper and share a stencil with a friend.
4. Have each child outline the stencil with a pencil and then cut out their heart shape.
5. When their heart is ready they should tell you one thing they are afraid of or that is a challenge for them, and requires courage, and then write or draw it on their heart.

Closing Circle (10 Minutes)

Gather everyone into a circle with their hearts.

Have each child share their heart by saying "It takes courage for me to..." (e.g., be in the dark, be near a spider, go down the tall slide, swim in the pool, raise my hand in class, etc.). The group responds with their hands on their hearts/chests and say together in response, "You have courage!"

Review the Hebrew Words of the Day:

- Have the children practice the Hebrew words with their bodies: Your hand makes an O and brings it to your heart, "Ometz" and then you form a heart-shape with your fingers over your heart, "Lev."

- Have the children say what *Ometz Lev* means (courage)
- Courage requires the commitment of your heart.

Pass out the At Home Challenge Sheet

Sing a goodbye song like *Shalom Chaverim* or *Oseh Shalom*.

At Home Challenge: Courage/*Ometz Lev*

Today, we learned about courage. We talked about what it takes to be brave and we practiced building our courage. We also made superhero cuffs and hearts of courage.

Here are the next steps to take at home to practice courage:

1. Have your child put their heart of courage somewhere they can see (on the refrigerator or on a bulletin board) so it can remind them to practice courage around that thing they are afraid of.
2. Talk as a family about something that might take some courage to do — either all together or in support of your child — and make a plan to do it. It could be going all the way underwater at the pool or inviting a new friend over. It could be going on a new kind of family adventure together. See if you can name what is scary about it before you give it a try. Your child can wear their superhero cuffs when they do it to remind them how much courage they have.