

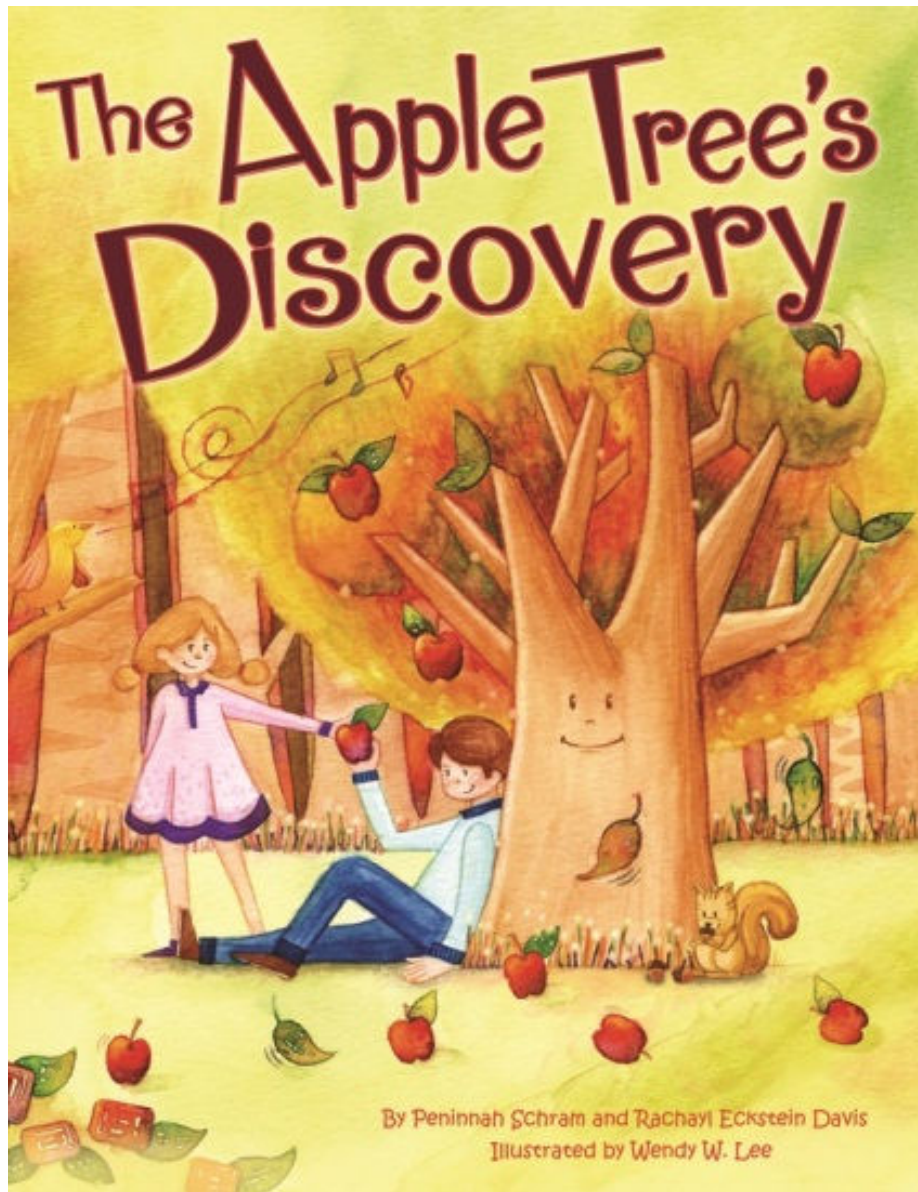
# KAR-BEN

PUBLISHING

A division of Lerner Publishing Group

## eSource

Resources for Teachers and Students



©Peninnah Schram and Rachayl Eckstein Davis  
KAR-BEN Publishing, a division of Lerner Publishing Group  
This guide may be downloaded for free at [www.karben.com](http://www.karben.com).  
This guide may be used expressly for educational  
purposes only, and cannot be sold.  
Please send questions or inquiries to [publicity@karben.com](mailto:publicity@karben.com).  
241 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55401

HC: 978-0-7613-5130-6  
PB: 978-0-7613-5132-0  
eB: 978-0-7613-8778-7  
Ages 5-9 | Grades K-3

To purchase the book, call 1-800-4KARBEN or visit [www.karben.com](http://www.karben.com).

# About the Book

## Summary

A little apple tree in a forest of oaks begs God for stars like those glimmering on the branches of the great oak trees beside her. As the seasons pass, she learns to appreciate her own gifts and realizes that it's possible to find a star in every individual.

## About the Authors

Peninnah Schram is a storyteller, teacher, author, recording artist, and a professor at Stern College of Yeshiva University. She is the author of many books of Jewish folktales and has recorded a CD of folktales, *The Minstrel and the Storyteller*. She has received many awards for her work including the Covenant Award for Outstanding Jewish Educator, The Circle of Excellence Award, and the National Storytellers Network Lifetime Achievement Award.

Rachayl Eckstein Davis is a storyteller, creative dramatist and educator. She has a B.A. in Education from Stern College and an M.A. in Educational Theater from New York University. This is her first children's book.

## About the Illustrator

Wendy W. Lee is a freelance illustrator based in Queens, New York. She has a B.F.A from Fashion Institute of Technology. She creates her cute and whimsical illustrations in watercolor.

## Story Origin

This story was told as a *midrash* by Rabbi Avi Weiss at a Workshop on Midrash at the first Jewish Storytelling Festival May 1984 held at Stern College of Yeshiva University, New York City. Peninnah Schram was the Director of that Festival. Both Peninnah and Rachayl attended this workshop. We received permission from Rabbi Weiss to write and publish this story. According to Rabbi Weiss, it is probably a Chinese parable, about the potential we all have as creations of God. We need to reach inside of ourselves to see the potential capabilities, the beauty, the God-like qualities we all have. Perhaps then, and only then, can jealousy, envy, self-hatred, and impatience with ourselves and with others end. Then we could share each other's happiness and be more open to each other's differences, as well.

This story also restores a sense of wonder and appreciation for nature and our world so that we can return to a perspective of preserving our world and all its beauty and miracle.

## Questions

- Have you ever wanted to have something you think another person has? Did you obtain that object? How? How did it make you feel? Tell about it.
- Why is envy called the "green-eyed monster"? Define/explain envy.
- Were you ever envious of another person? Tell the story.

- Draw what envy looks like. How does it make you feel?
- Why is one of the Ten Commandments: Thou Shalt Not Covet?
- What does this type of wrongful desire often lead to? Is the apple tree in this story guilty of “covet”?
- How can the apple tree learn to be more patient? How can you learn to be patient when you want something so badly and right away? Is having patience always good advice? Explain your answer.
- How is an apple tree like a person? How is an apple like a person? How is a person like an apple tree? Like an apple?
- What is so special about a star? Look in a dictionary under “star” and other entries after, such as star-flower, etc.
- What special qualities do you have that are star-like?
- What potential qualities do you think you have now that will develop as you grow? Can you be patient to wait until then?
- What would make you feel “truly” special that you think you don’t have?
- What special qualities do you think you have that others would like to have?
- Are there special qualities that everyone can have and still keep even when they share them?
- How do you go about seeing things differently than you usually do? Give examples. What does it mean to “turn your direction”?
- For example, I like to think that life is like a diamond with many surfaces/facets to it. If you turn a diamond this way and that way, you will see different angles and catch the light reflecting off it differently, etc. We sometimes need to examine our decisions, or conflict problems, etc. in a similar way – by turning it in our mind’s eye and seeing what else we must consider or what other motives/reasons are behind the problems.
- If you had a fight with a friend or sibling, how do you think it could be resolved by “changing your direction a little bit”? Could the world become more peaceful if the nations “changed their directions a little bit”? How? Explain.
- In Ethics of Our Fathers (Pirke Avot), there is a saying about Torah: “Turn it and turn it, for everything is in it...” (Chapter 5, 26).
- If you could talk to the apple tree, what might you say to it?

# Trees: Apple and Oak

How does the size of apple trees at their full size compare to oak trees at their full size?

Oak trees produce acorns and apple trees produce apples.

**RIDDLE: Question:** Would you rather eat an acorn or an apple?

**Answer:** It depends on whether you're a squirrel or not.

Draw the leaf of an oak tree and the leaf of an apple tree. Compare.

Compare the wood of the two trees. Apple wood is excellent for carving because it is soft, while oak logs are better to burn in a fireplace because they make a hotter fire.

Trace the seasonal changes of both trees. Which comes first in the apple tree, the leaves or the blossoms?

The Hebrew word for apple is *Tapuah* which is derived from the root word *nun-peh-het* that means "blow," i.e. "diffuses aroma." When the apple tree is filled with a bouquet of blossoms, it certainly does diffuse a wonderful aroma.

There are hundreds of varieties of apples. Name at least four kinds of eating apples. How do you usually eat an apple? As a whole? Cut in half? Cut into slices? As apple sauce? As apple pie?

Do you think there were stars in all the apples you have ever eaten? Why is the star visible only when you cut the apple across its diameter/belly?

## Observation and Sensory Exercises

Go to a grocery store/farm market and observe and buy several different types of apples. Note the differences in size, shape and color. Explore the attributes of apples regarding size, shape, color, texture.

Cut them in different ways/directions. Taste them. Core the apple with an apple corer, peel, make apple sauce.

Leave an apple out of the refrigerator for a few days and note that, after a time, the skin wrinkles. If the apple is peeled, it turns brown after a short while. However, if you dip the peeled apple in lemon juice immediately, the lemon juice will keep the apple from turning brown.

Make apple rings and let them dry out.

Count the seeds that are in each apple and plant them.

Dip apples in honey and eat. This is a custom at Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, that usually occurs in September. It is a way to wish everyone a sweet year. The apple is symbolic of the wish for a round year; the honey for a sweet year. Explain.

Cut the apple so that the star is pronounced. (Sometimes you have to find just the right spot for this to happen.) Dip each cut half into food coloring and "print" the side of the apple on paper. The imprint of the star will make a design on the paper. Create a series of pictures with your apple "paint brush."

Cut the apple into thin slices with the star in the middle of each slice. (You might want to use an apple slicer for this activity.) Put the slices on a sunny window sill for a few days until they dry and become slightly shriveled. Dip each slice into Modge Podge (a type of shellac) and let dry. Then, with a magnet gun, attach a magnet to each slice and you have created a refrigerator magnet.

## Judaism and Stars

In Judaism, there are many biblical and folkloristic references to stars.

In the beginning of the fourth day, God said:

Let there be lights (luminaries) in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth. And it was so. And God made the two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; and the stars...And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day (Genesis I, 14-19).

The Sabbath and holidays end about one hour after sunset – actually when three stars are visible in the already darkened sky. In this way, the distinction is made between light and darkness, between the holy and the profane, between the Sabbath (and holidays) and the regular work day. To be sure, three visible stars (about 42-50 minutes after sunset) resolve the ambiguity of the twilight question.

Besides the sun, name four stars in the sky. If you know how to “read” the skies in each of the four seasons, then one can see the many specific formation of stars. Many people used the Zodiac, or formation of the stars, to predict one’s future (Astrology). For example, when we congratulate someone, we say, **Mazel Tov**, which means “May you have a lucky constellation of stars.”

Torah binders, or wimples, were traditionally decorated with a painted or embroidered inscription which included the name of the child and his father, the birth date and the Zodiac sign, along with the phrase, “May God raise him to Torah, to *huppah* (wedding canopy) and to good deeds.” The wimple was made of the swaddling cloth used at the boy’s circumcision, and then brought to the synagogue for wrapping around the Torah at the boy’s Bar Mitzvah. Naturally at birth it was time to acknowledge the constellation of stars at the time of the baby’s birth and to include the sign as part of his Jewish heritage.

Stars are also often used as symbols of multitude in the Torah. God rewards Abraham for his piety by promising him: “I will bless thee,...I will multiply thy seeds as the stars of the heaven...” (Genesis 22, 17).

Stars were also part of one of Joseph’s dreams (Genesis 37, 9). Tell that story and illustrate it.

## Language Exercise

Imagine a night with stars. Use word associations with the word “star,” such as sparkling, twinkling, starry, etc.

See the painting “Starry Night” by Van Gogh. Find other paintings with stars. Create your own painting, drawing, or collage with stars.

## Creative Drama Exercise

Teacher gives instructions and gets the children to act according to the instructions::

“Pretend you are a seed. Get as tiny as you can. Pretend you are snuggling deep into the ground. But now imagine the kind of seed you are and what kind of tree/flower/bush/plant you will become. What will you look like? What kind of colors will you have for your leaves and/or flowers? What kind of shape and size will you grow into?

The season is winter and the ground turns cold and hard, but you are protected below the surface of the earth. Then the warmth of the spring sun begins to thaw the earth. The rains fall. The seed begins to push through the earth. It’s hard for a little seed to push through, but as it grows, it pushes harder and soon breaks through.

Now feel the sun; the wind; the rain; the wind. And the seed grows and grows. And soon it is a full size tree or flower or bush or plant. And now you celebrate because you have your leaves or flowers or fruit. Sway with the wind. Dance with the sun. Show your love of the world.”

Oak trees are native American trees. There are white, black, red, pin oaks. Find pictures of the various kinds of oak trees and their acorns.

Apple trees were brought to America from Europe.

How do you think the apple tree felt when it first came to its new home here in America? What would the other trees have said to the apple tree? Would they welcome the apple tree? Would they reject the apple tree?

Create a dialogue scene or improvisation between the trees in the woods when the first apple tree was about to be planted.

Stories, like stars, are within each of us. What stories are within you? How can we find those stories and tell them? For what purposes? Will we become closer to our friends when we tell them our stories?

# **Jewish Attitude Toward Trees**

Trees are highly regarded in Torah and are treasured in Israel. A tree is to be enjoyed, to be used for protection, for food, to indicate sources of water. Trees are to be planted for the sake of the children, not just to be used up without replanting. God said to Adam while he was showing him around the Garden of Eden, "Do not spoil or destroy My world, for if you do, there is no one to set it right after you."

There is the well-known Talmudic legend of Honi Ha'Me'agal, or Honi the Circle Maker, who saw an old man plant a fruit tree. When Honi asked him if he would live long enough to enjoy the fruits of that carob tree (which takes 70 years to grow fruit), the old man replied that if he didn't live long enough to eat the fruit of that tree, then surely his children and his grandchildren would (Ta'anit 23a).

In other words, we must plant for future generations. Just as we came into the world and trees had been planted for us, so we must in turn leave trees for our future generations. And as everyone knows, trees take many years to grow to their full potential.

Another Jewish approach to trees has been to compare the Torah to a tree. "Torah is a tree of life..." The Jewish tradition also says that if you are busy planting a tree and you are told that the Messiah has come, first finish planting the tree, then go to welcome the Messiah. Why would this be so?

In the Aggada (Talmudic stories), we find "when a fruit tree is being cut down, its cries can be heard from one end of the earth to the other."

# **Jewish Connection to Apple Trees**

In Song of Songs 2:3 we see an allusion to the apple tree: "As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the sons; in his shade I delighted and sat and his fruit was sweet to my palate."

In the first chapter of Exodus, we read how the Pharaoh ordered the midwives to kill Israelite boys at birth and also imposed such harsh measures on the Israelite men that they had to work in the fields with very little time to sleep. As a result, the Israelites remained in the fields to rest without going home. Their wives became alarmed that the Jewish people would not survive without children. Through the women's cleverness and a miracle from God, these righteous women visited their husbands in the fields and then another miracle happened for they soon gave birth to 600,000 babies in the apple orchard. These women became known as the righteous women who saved the Jewish people.

It is written in Song of Songs 8:5, "I roused you under the apple tree. There your mother brought you forth."

In B. Sotah 11b and Exodus Rabbah 1:12 it says that it was these children born under the apple trees (now grown) who were the first to recognize God when they said "This is my God" (Exodus 15:2).

In the Gemara in Masechet Shabbat 88, Rabbi Chama ben Chanina asks why the Jewish people are compared to an apple tree? They are compared to an apple tree to teach us that just as an apple tree, its fruit appears before its leaves. So too did Israel first say “we will do (naaseh)” before “we will hear (nishma).”

The Pesikta Zutreta says; Just as the apple tree bears fruit only 50 days after first blooming, so too the Torah was given to the Jewish people 50 days after the Exodus from Egypt.

## Story Theater Exercise

Have the class act out the story of *The Apple Tree's Discovery* as story theatre:

Appoint a narrator who knows the story well and can keep it going. (A teacher or teacher aide might play this role, especially with young children.)

Use many of the children to be the oak tree forest and stand like an oak tree (“tall and majestic”). One child can play the apple tree with its branches reaching out to the sides in a “weeping tree” formation. A few children can supply the sound effects, especially the wind.

Begin the story narration. The “trees” should respond to the narration. What do the oak trees say about the apple tree’s request? Do they think the apple tree is cuckoo? Spoiled? Strange? Why?

Narrator, who can take on the role of “God” in the story, should create and encourage dialogue between the oak trees and between the oaks and the apple tree. Do the trees become friends after a while? Would there be good will between all the trees? Show their feelings through what the trees say and do. How does the apple tree feel at the end when it too has stars? How do the oak trees feel when they find out they don’t have stars after all? Does it matter to them? Or is it enough to them that the apple tree saw them with stars? Does everyone have to have stars?

Many of these questions can be discussed after the story and before the improvisation. Or after a try-out improvisation. Then perform the story again with more interactive dialogue.

## Jewish Blessing

Jews are a people who bless. We have blessings for all times in our lives. When we see something wondrous, such as a rainbow, we recite a blessing. When we eat a seasonal fruit for the first time, we offer a blessing. Every Friday evening (erev Shabbat), usually after the *Kiddush*, we bless our sons and daughters. Of course, we recite a blessing over the wine (*Kiddush*) and the challah (*motzei*) on Shabbat and holidays. We say a blessing before eating and recite the Grace after meals (*Birkat haMazon*). There are seven blessings recited under the wedding canopy. Just as God blessed, we, too, have the ability to bless each other. When is there not a time for an appropriate blessing to be recited.

In a Talmudic story, a man is walking in the desert. Hot and thirsty, he sees a tree. After washing in the stream running under the tree, resting in the shade of its leafy branches and eating its delicious fruit, the man



turns to the tree and asks: “Tree, O tree, how should I bless you?” He realizes that the tree has already been blessed with a stream of water to nourish it, leaves to shade the traveler and sweet fruit. Finally, he concludes, “I will bless you, O tree, that your offshoots be planted and may they become like you” (Ta’anit 5).

The following can become a class project or a family project:

Create a blessing for the apple tree.

Create a blessing for a child using the characteristics of the apple and the apple tree, suggested by the story.

**KAR-BEN**  
PUBLISHING  
A division of Lerner Publishing Group

[www.karben.com](http://www.karben.com)