



The Ometz Lev Game

Courage is a special kind of knowledge; the knowledge of how to fear what ought to be feared and how not to fear what ought not to be feared.

--David Ben Gurion

Topic

Mitzvot and *Middot*, Purim

Grade Level(s)

3rd and older

Goals for the Lesson/Activity

Students will be able to:

- Translate “*ometz lev*” into “courage.”
- Articulate what it means to have *ometz lev*.
- Explain the *Ometz Lev* of Queen Esther, et al.
- Compare and contrast different levels of *ometz lev*
- Explain the *ometz lev* of Queen Esther, Mordechai, and Vashti

Supplies Needed

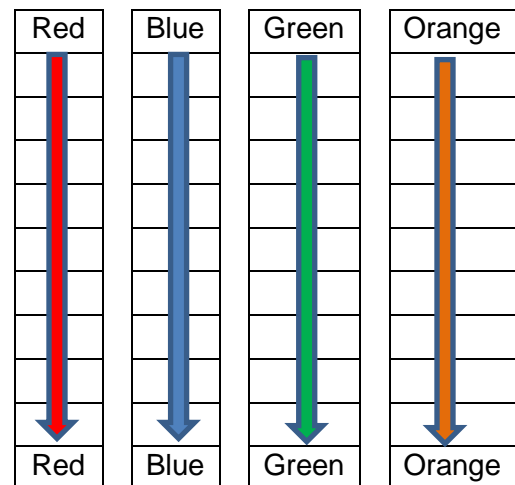
- 10 Sheets of colored paper per team; each team needs its own color.
[Consider printing “אומץ לב/Ometz Lev” (available for download) on the paper.]
- A room with open floor space to lay down the runway columns for each team
- *Ometz Lev* Cards (download), printed on cardstock and cut into game cards
- *Ometz Lev* Purim Chart (download)

How to Set Up the Game

Create a game board on the floor by placing the colored paper in columns.

Adjust the number of runway pieces depending on the amount of time allotted.

Print and cut out *Ometz Lev* cards. [Note to Teacher: Since you want to encourage teams to exhibit *ometz lev*, consider rigging the cards so that teams are more likely to have positive outcomes at the beginning of the game and, therefore, become more courageous.]





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Background for Teachers

אומץ לב (*ometz lev*, courage) has been an important *midah* (character trait) in Jewish literature as far as back as the *Tanakh*. While *ometz lev* itself is not mentioned explicitly in most cases, the idea of not fearing is mentioned many times (e.g. *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) 31:6, Joshua 1:9). Generally, this “not fearing” comes as the result of a belief that God will ultimately provide protection.

Ometz lev can be particularly important when standing up for other people or for one’s beliefs in the face of potential danger. This game will help students explore what it means to exhibit *ometz lev*. While the reflections at the end of this game focus on Purim, they can be adapted to explore *ometz lev* in connection with different narratives, including ones connected with Hanukkah and Pesach.

Prior to playing the game, review *Megillat Esther* (the Story of Esther) with students. Tell the class that you want to now take a break and play *The Ometz Lev Game!*



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For 2-5 Teams

Object of the Game

Be the first team to advance 10 spaces. Will your team have the *ometz lev* to make decisions that help you to advance fastest?

How to Play the Game

1. Divide into teams.
2. Teams take turns advancing on their color runway towards the finish line.
3. On a turn, each team can choose one of two options:
 - a. Move one space forward, OR
 - b. Pick an *Ometz Lev* card and follow the instructions.

The different *Ometz Lev* cards include:

- **Move Forward** cards – Teams move forward the number of spaces indicated on the card.
 - **Move Backwards** cards – Teams move backward the number of spaces on the card. Note: Teams cannot move behind the starting line.
 - **Stay Where You Are** cards – Teams stay where they are.
 - **Lose a Turn** cards – Teams stay where they are and lose one additional turn.
- c. Each team picks their team spokesperson to report the team's decision about whether to move or to pick a card.

How to Win the Game

When your team reaches the end of your runway, your team wins the game. Remember that the game can be completely finished only at the end of a round, so there may be multiple winners if more than one team reaches the end of their runway.

Postgame Activities

1. Explain that "*Ometz Lev*" means "Courage." Ask teams why they made decisions to pick cards or to simply accept the one space they could move automatically. Answers will vary but will likely revolve around whether teams wanted to take a chance instead of just moving one space.



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2. Direct discussion to concepts of *ometz lev*. Ask students what this game has to do with the idea of “courage.” How does picking a card demonstrate *ometz lev*?
3. Making the connection to Purim: Have students fill out the Purim *ometz lev* chart in teams. After they have completed the sheet, discuss how *ometz lev* manifests in the narrative. Open up the discussion to explore how students might apply lessons learned about *ometz lev* from *Megillat Esther* in their own lives.
4. **For older students**, consider expanding the discussion about what *ometz lev* entails and ask students to reflect on some of the following factors:
 - i. How great the risk was for the people to do nothing (e.g. Mordechai tells Esther that she is also in danger if she does nothing.)
 - ii. How much people had to gain for themselves by acting with courage (e.g. Mordechai seems to work for his people but also has something to gain as a part of the Jewish people. Vashti seems to act out of personal pride.)
 - i. How onerous the consequences could be for demonstrating *ometz lev* (e.g. possibly dying vs. possibly being alone)?