



ON A BEAM OF LIGHT

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Long before Einstein was a household name, he was just a boy – a boy with a powerful imagination. This story of a Jewish hero underscores the potential each person’s creative mind holds.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

The word “Einstein” is synonymous with intellect, and no wonder. Albert Einstein followed his daydreams to wherever they took him, which turned out to be the far reaches of the scientific frontier.

“Imagination is more important than knowledge,” he once said, but Einstein also had some serious schooling. The Jewish people have long been known as “the people of the book”. This is a reference not only to study of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) but also to the value of education. Wherever Jewish families have moved, after securing shelter the first question usually asked is, “Where will my children go to school?” Jewish communities have long created a culture of learning, both inside the home and out. Einstein’s parents, products of that culture themselves, raised their son in that milieu, and the resulting education helped Einstein give flight to his daydreams.

But Einstein didn’t appear to be an “Einstein” at first. Slow and dreamy, he was viewed by others as a bit odd. His parents accepted him as is. Jewish text instructs, “Teach each child according to his way” (Proverbs 22:6). Educators now understand that teaching to children’s particular strengths and learning styles yields positive results. Einstein remained a *little* odd his whole life, but that didn’t stop him from making great contributions and sharing his intellectual gifts with the world.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

As the author of this story points out, Albert Einstein’s life was too full and rich to tell it all in one book. Researching his life with your children may open conversations on many topics, including:

Spirituality. “Science without religion is lame,” Einstein once said. “Religion without science is blind.” He recognized that the world is full of unseen mystery, and his desire to learn more about it was, at bottom, a spiritual yearning: “I want to know [God’s] thoughts; the rest are details.”

Immigration. Einstein arrived on US shores decades after many of his Jewish peers. The largest waves of immigration to the US came in the late 1800s and early 1900s, but many Jewish families left Europe in the 1930s to escape the threat of war and persecution.

Israel. Einstein, known for being a strong cultural Zionist, was actually offered the Presidency of the state of Israel in 1952. He turned it down, understanding that he was a better thinker than politician, and had far more experience dealing with “objective matters” than with people. He did say, “... my relationship to the Jewish people has become my strongest human bond, ever since I became fully aware of our precarious situation among the nations of the world.”