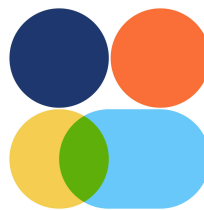


LESSON PLAN



Theme The importance of our natural environment

Grade Level(s)

Middle-High School

Time of lesson 40 Minutes

Key Ideas

- As with all other Jewish festivals, Tu B'Shevat is a chance for Jews to think about how we live our lives and how we can grow and develop as a person.
- During Tu B'Shevat Jews are encouraged to think about their natural environment and how to protect it.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- be able to connect the Tu B'Shevat theme of caring for the world with their responsibility to take care of the earth.
- be able to identify reasons why trees are so important in the Jewish faith/history.

Materials & Resources

- Provide a copy of the passages that the students will be reading.
- Ensure that students have proper clothing for outdoor activity.

Warm-up and Overview

- In the description of the creation of the world in the book of Genesis, G-d explains our responsibility to the environment in this way:
 - 2:15 Hebrew Bible
 - וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם וַיִּנְחֵהוּ בְּגַן־עֵדֶן לְעֹבְדוֹ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ:
 - "Vayikakh Adonai Elohim et-ha'adam vayanikheihu b'gan-eden l'ovdah u'leshamrah."
 - The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it.

Introduction

The Torah says that even in times of war, it is forbidden to destroy trees. Read the quote with the students.

- "When you besiege a city for many days to wage war against it to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them, for you may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Is the tree of the field a man, to go into the siege before you? However, a tree you know is not a food tree, you may destroy and cut down, and you shall build bulwarks against the city that makes war with you, until its submission."

Specific Accomodations

- Provide the glossary handout including key terms if needed.

Activity

- Students will all go outside and be prompted by the teacher to be present and observe nature. Don't let weather be a hindrance. Start by having the group stand still and take a few breaths and tune into the surroundings. Students will be encouraged to go off by themselves to a safe space not far from the group, but where they can explore nature independently. They will be encouraged to explore and connect with nature. Students will be instructed to find a tree and to be calm and quiet to observe nature and the trees. They should focus on their sense of sight to explore it. Tell the students that there is not a special way to do this activity. It is ok for their mind to wander because you are not asking them to think or solve anything. For example, the students can be encouraged to observe the different shades of color of the tree and how the sunlight filters through the leaves. The teacher will call the students back after 7 minutes.
- While still outside, the students will be asked to take turns sharing what they observed.
- Students will then be instructed to find a tree and to focus on their sense of touch to explore it. Using touch to explore can create a sense of connection and be grounding. Encourage the students to feel the textures of the tree bark, the moss, the leaves, etc. The teacher will call the students back after 7 minutes.
- While still outside the students will be asked to take turns sharing what they observed and how it might have been different from the first time when they were prompted to use just their sense of sight.

Options for Extensions

Consider having students do research on deforestation and/or other environmental practices that can be studied. Consider repeating the activity using a different sense—for example, students can be encouraged to close their eyes for a moment and attend to the sounds that they hear.

Options for Remediation

For the students that need more of a literal message, In keeping with the custom of נְטִיעָה שֶׁל שִׂמְחָה, *netiyah shel simcha*, planting to mark a joyous occasion, students can be encouraged to think/plan how they can plant something that is meaningful and personal.

Review and Closing

- Encourage the students to take a moment while still in nature to express gratitude and or find appreciation in the natural beauty around us.
- Encourage the students to think about how they felt when they were in nature.
- Revisit the quote that was introduced at the beginning of the activity.
- Ask the students if after completing the activity they feel any differently about the quotation? Does it have any other meaning that you might not have thought of? Did you feel different being disconnected from screens and technology?

Checking for Understanding

- Ask probing questions during closing activities to ensure that students understand the importance of trees.
 - Why is it important to care for our environment?
 - Why do you think that the Torah says we are forbidden to destroy trees?
 - Did you find that doing the outdoor sensory activity made you think about the quote differently? Why or why not?



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2:15 Hebrew Bible

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"Vayikakh Adonai Elohim et-ha'adam vayanikheihu b'gan-eden l'ovdah u'leshamrah."

The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it.

The Torah says that even in times of war, it is forbidden to destroy trees.

"When you *besiege* a city for many days to *wage* war against it to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by *wielding* an ax against them, for you may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Is the tree of the field a man, to go into the *siege* before you? However, a tree you know is not a food tree, you may *destroy* and cut down, and you shall build *bulwarks* against the city that makes war with you, until its *submission*."



Glossary

Besiege: surround a place with armed forces to capture it or force its surrender

Bulwarks: a defensive wall

Destroy: to put an end to the existence of something by damaging or attacking it

Submission: accepting a superior force or to the will or authority of another person

Wage: carry on

Wielding: having and being able to use power or influence