

## North America and Israel: Two branches of one family tree Three Lesson Unit

### Introduction

The Jewish People, wherever we live, celebrate the New Year for Trees on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the Hebrew month of Sh'vat, usually in January or February on the secular calendar. In the Land of Israel, this is the appropriate agricultural time for planting trees. Our whole Jewish family, the many branches throughout the world, celebrates trees on Tu BiSh'vat and eats fruits that grow on trees.

In these lessons, we will celebrate the New Year for trees by learning about what tree fruits we have in North America, and what tree fruits our relatives in Israel eat. We will make a Tu BiSh'vat tree in our classroom, and hang pictures of ourselves with tree fruits and pictures of our Israeli counterparts with tree fruits that they eat in Israel.

We will also learn or practice the blessings (*brachot*) for eating fruits of the trees and taste some of those fruits.

It may be better to prepare the tree and activities a couple of days before Tu BiSh'vat so that the classroom can transform during the preparation and celebration of the holiday. Or, perhaps this could be a beautiful ending activity for the Tu BiSh'vat Seder (ceremonial meal) or on the day of Tu BiSh'vat.

### **Enduring Understandings:**

Our Jewish Family Tree has branches here and in Israel.

Tu BiSh'vat is the New Year for Trees, when all of the Jewish family (here and in Israel) enjoys fruits that grow on trees and acknowledge our appreciation for all that trees do for us and our world.

### **Essential Questions:**

How am I part of the Jewish family tree?

How is our Israeli family part of the family tree?

What fruits grow on trees? What is the same and what is different about the fruits on North American trees and on trees in the Land of Israel?

### **Questions to be Addressed:**

What is Tu BiSh'vat?

Why is Tu BiSh'vat in the winter?

How is a family like a tree?

What fruits grow on trees?

What fruits grow on trees in the Land of Israel?

What are the *brachot* (*blessings*) for eating the fruits and planting trees?

### **Goals/Objectives**

- For children in Reform Early Childhood programs, their teachers and their families, to engage with some realities about Israel and Jewish Peoplehood in their celebration of Tu BiSh'vat
- To create educational programming that Early Childhood Educators and families of young children can adapt and use to learn about Tu BiSh'vat and the “Jewish Family Tree”
- To help connect individual Jewish families in the US to Israel
- To teach the blessings for eating fruit and planting of trees to children, teachers, and families
- To create attractive and useful bulletin board materials for Early Childhood classrooms
- To create web-based materials for use by educators and families for Tu Bish'vat

### **Materials Needed**

- The poem “To be a Tree” by Datya Ben-Dor, downloadable [here](#).
- The song “Ruach Ruach” as an introductory piece– downloadable [here](#). See the movements for the song [here](#). A movie with song and motions together is viewable [here](#).
- A Bulletin Board or wall to hang blessings for eating fruits of trees in Hebrew and English and Hebrew titles for bulletin board in Hebrew and English (printed from website) [Click here for materials to make a great bulletin board for your classroom..](#)
- [Photos of Israeli children/families with fruits from Israel](#) (printed from website), attached to construction paper “leaves.”
- Colored construction paper to draw and cut out big leaves to hang on tree
- Scissors
- Strings to hang the leaves on the branches or staples for bulletin board
- A hole puncher.
- Glue.
- Individual Picture of each child/family with a fruit they eat at home
- Pens/pencils/Markers/crayons
- For tasting, and according to your classroom allergy rules: Fruits/nuts that grow in North America: apples, chestnuts, peaches, pecans (also oranges, most nuts other than peanuts) and Fruits/nuts that grow in Israel: dates, figs, oranges, apricots, pomegranates, persimmons, pomelos, almonds (most tree fruits and nuts...)

EITHER:

- A bucket full of soil
- A big leafless branch that looks like a small tree (to “plant” in the bucket and

hang paper leaves on

OR:

- A bulletin board with a paper tree-trunk with branches (to hang paper leaves on)

### **Time Frame**

Three lessons, each 20-40 minutes.

**Lesson One: Tu BiSh'vat is the New Year for Trees**

**Lesson Two: Fruits that Grow on Trees**

**Lesson Three: Israel and North America: Two Branches of one Tree**

### **Preparation for lessons:**

Print bulletin board materials and decorate Bulletin Board with signs for Tu BiSh'vat and the blessings for Tu BiSh'vat. If you are making the tree in the bucket, put photos of trees on the bulletin board or other artwork the children have made. If you are using the bulletin board for the tree project, make a large leafless tree with two big branches out of construction paper, and hang the sign that says "America" or "Canada" over one branch and the sign that says "Israel" over the other branch. [Download here.](#)

### **Lesson One: Tu Bi'Shvat is the New Year for Trees** (~25 min plus clean-up)

#### **A. Introduction: Poem/discussion** (10 minutes):

1. Print the poem "What is it Like to Be a Tree," which can be downloaded [here](#).
2. Read the poem "What is it Like To be a Tree" (could be read by two people as a role play – one person is the tree and the other is the child) and then some guiding questions
  - How do you think a tree feels?
  - What is similar between you and the tree? (Children can pretend to be trees and see what parts of their body correspond to trees – the hands are branches, the legs are roots, the hair is the tree-top and leaves etc.) Also, introduce idea of a tree as a living thing: We eat and drink, the tree "drinks" water and eats nutrients in the soil, there are families of different trees, and we also have different families etc.
3. Tell the Children that just as we have birthdays and wish each other happy birthday, and the world has a birthday at the new year, Tu BiSh'vat is considered the New Year/Birthday of the Trees, when we and Jewish people around the world celebrate trees, and say blessings for and eat fruits that grow on trees. Now is the right time of year to plant trees in Israel, and the time that older trees in Israel start to grow fruit. Our Jewish brothers and sisters in Israel are planting trees now.

#### **B. Hebrew Vocabulary Activity** (10 min)

1. Part of our Jewish family lives here in North America, and part of our Jewish family lives in Israel. Now is the time in Israel when trees start to grow fruit. What language do Jews in Israel speak? (Hebrew).
2. Vocabulary Role play: Teach the Hebrew vocabulary for Tu Bishvat. For pronunciation, you can listen to an audio file of these words [here](#).
3. The words and their pictures are part of the bulletin board which you can download [here](#). Stand in a circle, and have a child introduce a motion for each word (like, hold arms as branches, stand still for tree, wave a hand like a leaf...) and have the other children do the motion as they say the Hebrew word. See how many words they can say and remember the motions.

English	Ivrit (Hebrew)	עברית
Tree	Etz	עץ
Trees	Etzim	עצים
Leaf	Aleh	עלה
Leaves	Alim	עלים
Branch	Anaf	ענף
Branches	Anafim	ענפים
Root	Shoresh	שורש
Roots	Shorashim	שורשים
Fruit	Pri	פרי
Fruits	Peyrot	פירות
Family	Mishpacha	משפחה
Families	Mishpachot	משפחות

The Land of Israel	Eretz Yisrael	אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל
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**(Optional recall exercise for later in the day:** Play a “memory game” by holding up the pictures and saying the Hebrew word, and then seeing how quickly they can shout the word when they see the picture. Or, after teaching the words, have the children make pictures or projects for each Hebrew word and hang them up next to the vocabulary word on the wall.)

### C. Bracha (Blessing) for Fruits/Nuts that grow on trees: (5 minutes)

1. Introduce the blessing over fruits of the tree by explaining to the children that on Tu BiSh’vat we say a blessing over fruits and nuts that grow on trees, like apples, oranges, plums, etc.
2. Say the blessing and see if they recognize any words, like “pri/fruit” and “etz/tree.” Have them repeat the words of the blessing a few times perhaps each time with a distinct creative rhythm. ([You can hear the blessing here](#)).

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

*Baruch Atah, Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borey p'ree ha-etz.*

Blessed is the Eternal our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

### Lesson 2: Fruits that Grow on Trees (~40 minutes plus clean-up)

#### **Introduction:** (10 minutes)

Teach the song “*Ruach Ruach*” along with the motions and the words. The words to the song can be downloaded [here](#). You can watch a video of the song to learn the melody and the motions at [here](#).

#### **Discussion:** (5 minutes)

Ask: What holiday celebrates the New Year for the trees? (Tu Bish’vat)

What are things we do on Tu BiSh’vat? (Say blessings for and eat the fruits of the tree; plant trees here and in Israel.)

Ask: What kinds of fruit grows on trees? (apples, oranges, pears, peaches, plums, nuts (except for peanuts), olives, dates, figs, apricots... NOTE: bananas and berries grow on bushes that wither to the ground each year, and therefore are blessed as “fruit of the ground” rather than “fruit of the tree.”)

Practice the blessing “*borei P’ri ha-Etz.*”

**Same/Different Activity:** (15 minutes)

Bring in dates, almonds, and olives—all traditional fruits of the tree that grow in Israel.

Also bring in apples and oranges, tree fruits that are eaten here (and in Israel).

Look at/touch/smell/taste the fruits. Talk about and or chart what is the same and what is different about the different fruits. Talk about which fruits traditionally grow in *Eretz*

*Yisrael* (the Land of Israel) and which grow in North America

When you taste the fruits, say the blessing “*borei P’ri ha-Etz.*”

**Chart Activity:** (10 minutes)

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and the best fruit/nut that grows on trees that I tasted is \_\_\_\_\_.

Make a large chart on chart paper that says “Fruits that Grow on Trees”

List the fruits each child liked the best:

For example: Ben liked to eat dates. Sarah liked to eat almonds. Max liked to eat apples. Rina did not like any of the fruits...

**Tell the children (and give materials to tell the parents) to take and print a photo of themselves at home, with some of their family members with a tree fruit that they have in their home. They should bring in the photo for the next lesson.**

**Lesson Three: Israel and North America: Two Branches of one Tree** (~35 min)

Note: This lesson can be done as a family education program, in conjunction with a Tu BiSh’vat Seder for families.

**A. Introduction: Our Jewish Family Tree (5 minutes)**

1. Review the song “Ruach Ruach” and ask what holiday is coming up soon. (Tu BiSh’vat, the New Year for Trees.)
2. Explain that there are members of our Jewish family who live all over the world and question where do your family members live?
3. Did you know that the Jewish People is like one big family—we all have the same great-great-great-great (etc) grandparents Abraham and Sarah? There are Jewish people all over the world, and they are all part of our big family. What are some things that members of the Jewish family do, no matter where we live? (We celebrate the same holidays, tell the same stories, read the same Torah, and all say prayers in Hebrew and learn to speak Hebrew, we plant trees and eat fruit on Tu BiSh’vat.)
4. There are members of the Jewish Family all over the world. Most of our Jewish Family lives in North America or in Israel. On Tu BiSh’vat, we remember that our Jewish family is like a big tree- with branches that grow here in North

America, and branches that grow in Israel. (Remind the children by showing them the bulletin board or the sign over the large tree branch in a bucket, with the Heading “Our Jewish Family Tree: North America and Israel.”)

### **B. Leaves for the Jewish Family Tree (10 minutes)**

**Preparation: Print out photos of Israeli children ([available here](#)) and glue them to leaves. Write the information from the website on the leaf (For example, “Assaf, Ema and Abba plant an almond tree”).**

Explain that we are going to make leaves for our Jewish Family tree, and we have leaves from Israel to hang too! Give each child (or have children make) a leaf from construction paper. Glue the photo of the child/family with a fruit (which they brought in from home), and write on the bottom of the leaf the names of the people in the photo and the fruit they are holding. (For example, “Ben, Sarah, Mommy, and Grandpa hold an apple”).

Have each child come up with a Tu BiSh’vat Blessing/Wish. Help write them on the back of the leaf, for example:

-“The Cohen family from New York: Max, Sophie, Lisa, and Brian, wish you a sweet Tu BiSh’vat – may your family flourish like a tree...”

-“The Friedman family from Miami: Hannah, Jennifer, and Bubee Judy, wish you a wonderful year full of rain and flowers”

-“The Barry Boys from Chicago: Michael, Jake, Oliver and Andrew wish your family health and laughter”

If hanging on a tree branch, punch a hole in each leaf and attach a string. (Otherwise you can use a stapler.)

### **C. Leaf Hanging/Blessing Ceremony and Card to Israeli Families (20 min)**

Preparation: Choose a Pre-School in Israel that you want to write a card for from the list shown [here](#). Make a large card with your school name and address, teachers’ names, and email address (if possible).

If you are using the “planted” branch in soil in a bucket, you can “plant” the tree as a class. If you are using a bulletin board, have a tree with empty branches ready for the leaves.

1. Play Israeli music in the background.
2. In front of the bulletin board, or in front of the bare branch in the bucket, help children understand that this is our Tu BiSh’vat Jewish Family Tree. We will decorate one side with our pictures, and one side with pictures of children in Israel celebrating Tu BiSh’vat. We will write our wishes/blessings in a card to send to a pre-school in Israel.
3. Have each child hang their leaf, and say who is in the picture. Read the blessings and have the teacher write them in a large Tu BiSh’vat card. Between every few

children, hang a leaf from an Israeli family on the tree and read about who is in the picture.

4. Send the card(s) to a pre-school in Israel—if you include your address, they have agreed to do their best to write back!

**NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO HAVE A TU BISH'VAT SEDER:**

Eat fruit of the tree and grape juice and say the blessings. Sing the song Ruach, Ruach, and use any other activities you would like. See the links below for all of the available support materials for further enriching your program and classroom!