

Tu B'Shevat: The New Year for Trees

Concepts:

- On Tu B'Shevat Hashem decides how the coming year will be for the trees.
- We make the brocha Shehechyanu on a fruit we haven't eaten this year.
- We eat some of the seven special species of Eretz Yisroel. The seven special are wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates.
- On Tu B'Shevat the trees that were asleep (dormant) during the winter start to wake up because Spring is coming.
- A Jew is like a tree; just as a tree needs roots to keep it strong, so does a Jew need to be connected to Torah to keep him/her strong.

Ideas for Tu B'Shevat:

- Discuss why trees are important. Locate things in the classroom that are made of trees. What foods come from trees? How would our life be different if we didn't have trees? Make a collage of things made from trees.
- Visit a nursery, flower shop or botanical garden.
- Make a leaf collection.
- Learn the parts of a tree: trunk, leaves, roots, bark, fruits/flowers
- Turn the House Center into a flower shop with plastic flowers and plants and other things found in a flower shop.
- Seed to Tree Dance: Have the children dance. They should start in the shape of a seed and slowly open to a small plant and grow and grow until they are stretching up and out as much as they can.

The Five Senses and Tu B'Shevat:

- Touch: Explore the different textures of fruits, plants, tree parts and seeds. Have the children close their eyes and guess what they are touching.
- Smell: Explore the different smells of fruits, plants, tree parts and seeds. Have the children close their eyes and guess what they are smelling.
- Sight: Name different colors and list the different fruits, plants, tree parts and seeds that are that color.
- Hearing: Put seeds in containers of different materials, shapes and sizes. Notice the difference in the sounds that they make.
- Taste: Bring in different types of fruits. Let each child taste each type and decide which is his/her favorite. Make a graph showing the favorite and post it on the class bulletin board.

Bulletin Board Ideas:

- Hang up examples of the two grains and five fruits in plastic bags.
- "Things Made From Trees"
- "Parts of a Tree"
- "We Are Flowers in Hashem's Garden" (*Have the children make flowers, and put a picture of the child in the middle of each one*)



Shevat

Planting Projects:

- **Carrot roots experiment:** Materials: two carrots, two glasses, red food coloring, sunny window, knife. Procedure: Fill up the two glasses with water. Put red food coloring in the glasses. Cut off the end tip of the carrots and put one carrot in each glass. Put the glasses in the window for a few days. After a few days, take out the carrots and cut one lengthwise and one horizontally. Notice how the water goes into the carrot. (This can be done with celery and various flowers using different colors.)
- **Plants need water:** Materials: Two similar plants. Procedure: Show the children the two plants. Tell them that one we are going to water and one we are not going to water. Watch the plants for a couple of weeks to see what happens. Keep a class journal with the children drawing pictures of each plant as the days go by.
- **Plants need light:** Materials: two sprouted lima beans, two clear plastic sandwich bags, paper towels, water, a sunny window, a dark space. Procedure: To sprout two lima beans, place each one on top of a moist paper towel in a separate bag. Place one in the light and one in the dark. Add water as needed to keep them moist. Observe what happens. Keep a class journal with the children drawing pictures of each sprout as the days go by.
- Take a plant and cover one of the leaves with cardboard so that it won't get any light. Observe what the leaf looks like after a few days. Take another piece of cardboard and put it outside on a patch of grass. Cover the cardboard with a rock so it won't blow away. See how the grass under the cardboard looks after not getting light for four days. What happens once you remove the cardboard?
- Put a plant facing the window. Observe which way the leaves face. Turn the plant around. After a few days, which way did the leaves turn?
- **Rooting a sweet potato:** To root a sweet potato in water, push toothpicks into the sides of the potato so that the potato will have the bottom half in a glass of water with the toothpicks resting on the rim of the glass. Keep the water level high enough to cover the bottom of the potato. In a few weeks, roots will grow out where the water is and leaves will grow out from the top.
- **Birdseed Garden:** Put a moist sponge on a plate and sprinkle it with birdseed. Put it in a sunny window. Keep the sponge moist. Watch the seeds sprout.
- **Chia Pet:** Decorate any container with a face. Put soil in the container and grass seed. Watch the grass/hair grow!
- **Grow a seed:** Using grocery store beans such as lima beans, wet a paper towel, put the paper towel in a plastic bag and place a few beans on the paper towel. Once the beans have sprouted, plant in Styrofoam cups or another container.
- **Tiny forest:** Give each child an egg carton. Pour a drop of glue in each section. Press pieces of non-drying clay into the glue and allow the glue to dry. Collect twelve small tree-like twigs and stick them into the clay for a small forest.

- Examine the different parts of plants and trees.

Living with the Times: Tu B'Shevat

- **Home Center:** Add fruit plates that were made in the Art Center.
- **Building Center:** Add trees that were made in the Art Center.
- **Learning Center:** Grow a potato plant.
- **Art Center:** Cut out pictures of fruit and glue them on a plate. Make three-dimensional trees from a variety of materials.

