

A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey

Lesson Plan for Grade 4

The lesson plan emphasizes the connection between the holiday and the season and to the nature of the Land of Israel. The plan contains activities that compare the way the holiday is celebrated in the Diaspora to the way it is celebrated in Israel and emphasizes the differences between symbolic and emotional connections to tangible, physical connections. In addition, the program introduces plants and trees in Israel.

- The month of Shvat in nature, why was the New Year for trees assigned to this day?
- Tu Bishvat in the Diaspora and in The Land of Israel – the symbolic and physical connection to the land.
- Our connection to The Land of Israel, a person is no more than the image of the scenery of his homeland.
- Getting acquainted with the vegetation of The Land of Israel.

Lesson 1 – Tu Bishvat – The Season and Nature

"There are four new years:

The first of Nissan: The new year for kings and festivals.

The first of Elul: The new year for animal tithes.

The first of Tishrei: The new year for sabbaticals and jubilees, for planting and for vegetables.

The first of Shevat: The new year for trees, as ruled by The House of Shammai.

The House of Hillel rule: On the fifteenth of that month:"

(Tractate Rosh Hashana, Chapter 1, Mishna 1)

1. Why are so many new years necessary? What is meant by new years?

In these cases, the new years are not referred to as holidays, rather, days marking the beginning and end of the year for various calculations. Especially for calculating the tithes that need to be given to the Levites and the priests, who do not own lands and yet provide services to the public. If a tenth of certain crops must be contributed, one must know from when one must count to consider the beginning and end of the year for this purpose.

The New Year for Trees is the new year for fruit of the trees.

2. Which fruit do you know are grown in Israel? Apples, avocado, oranges, olives and dates.





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3. Which, of these fruits grown in Israel are grown naturally and which of them were imported to the land? Which are the seven species our land was blessed with, or fruits mentioned in the Scriptures, for example? (olives, figs, pomegranates, dates, apples)
4. Which of the fruits of Israel ripen in the month of Shvat – at the end of winter? None.

We celebrate the holiday of the tree – fruits in a time of the year that fruits of Israel do not ripen. Since this is not a holiday but a date for calculating tithes of taxation. Basically, it assists us in figuring out which fruit belongs to the former year and which - to the current year.

And why was the new year for fruit assigned to Tu Bishvat?

In the time of the Mishnah, Tu Bishvat was marked as the new year for calculating contributions and tithes – the taxes of those times.

By setting aside contributions and tithes of fruit produce our forefathers provided sustenance to the priests and Levites, since they did not have fields for growing crops or vineyards, and for the poor people who could not provide for themselves.

Our rabbis taught: A tree whose fruits have reached initial maturity prior to Tu Bishvat, is regarded as fruit from the previous year, whose tithes may differ from those of the year in question. Those who reach this stage after Tu Bishvat require contributions assigned for the following year.

(Bavli, Rosh Hashana 15, Page 2)

Starting the month of Shvat warm days are more common in Israel. The sun elevates its route and the trees, who, till now had shed their leaves, begin to draw waters of the new year. Therefore, the 15th of Shvat was marked as the New Year for Trees.





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A Legend for Tu Bishvat – An Arabic Folk Tale

In the rainy days each man is confined to his tent, sits near the burning fireplace and naps. The sheep and cattle are also kept in a barn around the tent, shivering from cold, and looking forward to sunny days, so they can go out and graze. Comes the month of Shvat and three cinders fall from heaven:

The first cinder – (the cinder of air), descends on the seventh of Shvat, warming the air and announcing the arrival of spring. But it's still not possible to find a good grazing space and the weather is still quite cold. The farmer waits another seven days, until the fourteenth of Shvat.

And on the fourteenth of Shvat the second cinder falls from heaven – (The cinder of water). The waters become warmer, penetrate the trees and restore their bloom and fruit. The farmer then sends his cattle to graze. Yet the wind is in control and time has not yet come to go out to work in the fields.

The farmer waits another seven days for the third cinder to descend – (the cinder of the earth) when the earth becomes warmer and is covered with soft grass, and then the farmer sets out to his work in the fields.

- What are the stages of warming according to the legend?
- What occurs on Tu Bishvat according to the legend?
- What is the connection between the legend and the explanation on assigning the New Year for Trees on Tu Bishvat? (the water)
- Draw a picture of the stages of the changing seasons according to the legend.



Lesson 2 – Tu Bishvat in the Diaspora and in The Land of Israel

At the fifteenth of Shvat fruit meal, Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk asked his student, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir to deliver a discourse on topics of the day. In response Rabbi Yitzchak Meir, opened his discourse on the passage of the Gemara dealing with the New Year for Trees, asking questions and answering them, challenged the text, and resolved the difficulties. Rabbi Mendel told him: Had we been in the Land of Israel, all we needed to do is to go out to the fields and look at the trees in order to understand the significance of the New Year for Trees, practically.

Explanation of difficult words (Kotzk – name of a town, *Pilpul* – a textuary discussion of details, *Gemara* – Talmud, *hiksha uperek* – He asked questions and 'took apart' - the passage)

- What did Rabbi Mendel tell Rabbi Meir?
- How was the holiday marked? How did Rabbi Mendel wish to mark the holiday?

<u>Oyfn Pripetshik (In the Burning Hearth)</u> Sung by: Chava Alberstein Lyrics and Music: Mark Warshawsky	<u>Zionist Translation</u> Ben Zion, Tel Aviv 1910	
<p>On the hearth, a fire burns, And in the house it is warm. And the rabbi is teaching little children, The alphabet.</p> <p>See, children, remember, dear ones, What you learn here; Repeat and repeat yet again, "Komets-alef: o!"</p> <p>Learn, children, with great enthusiasm. So I instruct you; He among you who learns Hebrew pronunciation faster - He will receive a flag.</p>	<p>In a wide field with plants and trees children are carrying a shovel There the rabbi is teaching Little children Aleph Beit.</p> <p>Chorus: This is the Torah, lovely children, Study, keep it, Plant, and seed the land, The turtle dove of spring has arrived.</p> <p>A tree is Aleph, a tree is Beit So is Gimmel a tree, Letters of trees on a green book That's endlessly wide!</p> <p>Chorus... This land was saturated by fathers</p>	<p>1. Compare the two songs in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location • Description of the open space • Season and weather • Tools and utensils • What the children are expected to do. <p>2. What is the central, most important theme of each song?</p> <p>3. To what is the student attached, which words indicate the connection to the people? (Torah, Jew as opposed to land, fathers, nation)</p>





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<p>Learn children, don't be afraid, Every beginning is hard; Lucky is the one has learned Torah, What more does a Jew need?</p>	<p>With sweat, lard and blood – When spring arrives, all of it will blossom And so will a nation bloom.</p>	
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Tu Bishvat in the Diaspora / Uri Tzvi Greenberg

I recall Tu Bishvat in the Diaspora: snow on the ground to the far end of the horizon, frost in the windows, the wonder-blossom-fringes of frost in the windows, how can these be explained to our sun-heated children in the Land of Israel?

And we are the children of Israel in the winter-exile - the blooming of our bodies: It is the Land of Israel blooming in us. Our fathers serve us carobs, figs and dates for a blessing on a day of snow and frost: the fruit of the distant Land of Israel, there is a warm glow in our eyes, the taste of the Land of Israel in our palate! In the winter, we say blessings over the fruits of our Land of Israel, which is ours always, forever.

But when I see the children of Israel from the Land of Israel itself, and my children among them, celebrating their Tu Bishvat holiday, without the winter snow under their feet, I know that for this reason our forefathers of blessed memory, and we their children of all the Diaspora years, held on to Tu Bishvat as one holds on to a trail of the land of Israel, and as people who drew the atmosphere of the land of Israel and the light blue color of its skies into our nostrils, with a sweet blessing of "*Shehechyanu*" on carobs - dates and figs. We have merited Tu Bishvat in a Jewish country.

1. Mark all the words connected to climate and nature in the passage.
2. How does Uri Tzvi Greenberg describe the atmosphere and the weather in the Diaspora on Tu Bishvat?
3. How are the Sabra (Israeli) children described? How are Jewish children of the Diaspora children described on Tu Bishvat?
4. How do fathers transmit the atmosphere of the Land of Israel to their children? What do they use for this?
5. What is the connection between Tu Bishvat in the Diaspora and the return to the Land of Israel in the Zionist era?





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On the fifteenth of Shvat itself - the New Year of the Trees - the spirit of weekday was felt at home as in other days of the week: there was no decoration, not even a hint of a holiday. Yet it was different than all of the other days, in that Mother had given me on this day, dry figs, dates and cherubs, to bring them into the *cheder* (school). And while Mother put the fruit in a paper bag, she praised the fruits of the Land of Israel, and praised the land in general, in that it bears milk and honey, and its trees bear wondrous fruits that are incomparable to those we have in the Diaspora. In the Land of Israel - says my mother – goats are fed with carobs, or the goats come on their own accord to the trees and pluck them with their mouths.

Shmaryahu Levin

In kindergartens. Also, the kindergartens in our city held a nice party on Tu Bishvat, a holiday of planting. At nine o'clock in the morning about four hundred kindergarten children of the seven kindergartens in our town, gathered and participated in a grand parade, and with flags and songs they headed to the Sapir Lot, designated for a kindergarten building, from there they proceeded to the greenery gate put up especially for this event and lined up into rows: each group surrounded pot holes where they planted their saplings. Following this, they passed once again through the gate, received Tu Bishvat goodies, and returned happily to their homes.

("Ha'aretz 20th of Shvat, 5680)

- Where is Tu Bishvat celebrated according to the article in "Ha'aretz"? And where is it celebrated according to Shmaryahu Levin?
- What customs are mentioned in these passages?
- What senses (smells, colors, sounds) does each passage spur?
- Which celebration do you prefer?

23 “When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree. (Leviticus 19)





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Lesson 3 – Our Connection to the Land of Israel

Leviticus – When you Enter

- What is the first commandment to be fulfilled when entering the land (planting)
- Why, in your opinion is it worthwhile to plant just as you enter the land? What does planting produce? Why must it take a priority? (So that there be fruit to eat, a tree takes a few years to produce fruit)
- What does the commandment of planting do to the people of Israel as they enter the land?
- Try to imagine yourselves as the people of Israel, arriving at a land that is new to you, after wandering in the desert and waging wars upon the entry to the land.

You were given a land of your own and you must cultivate it. What would you do? How would you feel?

Write a letter or an article, written by one of the Children of Israel, describing the planting of the first trees in their land.

Many tasks were given to us by the Lord: to plow and seed and reap, and bundle, and trample, and winnow, to plant and hoe, to pick grapes, to press, to feed cattle and birds, to shear the flocks, and to preserve the fruits of our toil and labor.

Yet the commandment of settling in the Land of Israel is great to the extent that it equals in importance all the rest of the Torah's commandments, I hereby carry these saplings on my shoulders to plant them in our land. As it is written: "They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them, said G-d, your Lord" (Amos 9)

(Shai Agnon, "Under the Tree")

Explanation of Difficult Words:

Hamakom – refers to G-d, **Lachrosh** – to plow, **Leamer** – to create bundles of stalks, **Ladoosh** – to trample in order to separate the peel from the kernel, **Lizrot** – to willow, to throw up in the air in order to separate the peel from the kernel, **Livtzor** – to pick grapes, **Lidroch** – to press grapes in order to produce wine, **amalenu** – our toil, **yegienu** – our efforts, **shkula** – is equal, **ganot** – gardens, **yinatshu** – shall leave.

Questions

- What tasks does Agnon list, what do they have in common? (agricultural work)
- Which commandment is equal to all other commandments of the Torah? What does this reflect about this commandment?
- Do you agree that to live in the land is a commandment? Why is it important?
- Consider why Agnon connects planting to the commandment of living in Israel (see the previous passage)?
- Consider the arguments for and against living in Israel. What could bring someone to leave the land? How would you convince him to stay in Israel?





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You may wish to develop this discussion in form of a **court case** with groups arguing against and for living in Israel, or in the form of a **letter** or as a **role-playing** activity entailing persuading a friend who wishes to leave the land – to remain.

A man is no more than a small stretch of land, a man is no more than the image of the scenery of his homeland. Shaul Tchernichovsky

- How does the land or the scenery and climate of the land influence man and society?
- Think about people who live in very cold places or very warm places, people living on high steep mountains, as opposed to people living in the desert – how would they look? What would they wear? What would they deal with? Where would they meet? What character type would they have?
- Think about a place you like in Israel, a scenery you are acquainted with, describe the place (verbally or by means of a drawing).
- Try to think about how the scenery influenced you? What characteristics of the Land of Israel and the place you have described, do you also have?
- Creative group assignment – Divide the class into groups. The descriptions or illustrations created in the previous stage, or production of a new shared presentation may be used to reflect the idea of "A man is no more than the image of his homeland scenery".

Lesson 4 – Plants of Israel

Divide the class into groups. Every group receives a region of Israel and information pages about vegetation in that region. Each group is instructed to prepare a banner describing the vegetation in the region assigned to it. Alternatively, groups may choose a tree typically found in the assigned area and must present it, in order to produce an advertising campaign for it.



Addendum – Information Pages for Israel's Vegetation

There are countries whose entire area is within one region, as in the countries of Central Europe. There are countries, such as the Land of Israel, where four phytogeographic regions meet: the Mediterranean, the Iran-Turan region, the Sahar-Arab region and the Sudanese region.

Region	Seasons	Average Precipitation	Miscellaneous	Regions in Israel
Mediterranean	Two seasons more or less equal: Rainy and comfortable winter and a hot and dry summer.	400 – 1500 mm	Always east of the sea, lots of grazing cattle, many fires	The area of the coastal plain ranges from <u>Gaza</u> to the <u>Lebanese</u> border, the <u>Galilee</u> , <u>Samaria</u> and the western slopes of the <u>Judean Hills</u> .
Iran – Turan	Extreme continental: Cold and snowy winter, spring and autumn – rainy and summer hot and dry	Up to 200 mm, Sometimes there's no rain	Sparse population, except near the <u>Nile</u> , <u>Euphrates</u> and <u>Tigris</u> rivers	The northern and central Negev and the Judean Desert.
Sahar- Arab	The rainy season is very short, and the dry season is very long, the winter is comfortable and the summer is very hot	Less than 200 mm	Non-regular precipitations; high level of salt in soil	Large expanses of the southern Negev, the Judean Desert and the Sinai Desert
Sudanese	Tropical: The winter is dry and the summer is rainy	50 – 1000 mm	Vegetations alters, commensurate with the levels of rain	Up to 32 degrees <u>latitude</u> . In Israel, it is only possible to discern a penetrating strip of land with this vegetation in the Jordan Valley and the Gulf of Eilat

Common Oak

A tree or evergreen shrub of the beech family. Common oaks are a principal component of the Mediterranean vegetation in the Land of Israel, and ancient objects made of its wood exist near holy sites throughout the country.

Description of the tree: The height of the oak varies from one meter (when it damaged be an increase of grazing of goats) to 8 m or more in humid places and in locations where there is tree protection. It has leathery leaves with serrated edges, which sometimes makes them prickly,

especially in low trees in dense woodlands. The leaves are bald on both sides, dark green and are 6-7 cm long.

In the spring the oak blooms, the pollination is done by the wind, and immediately after it, the male flower "earrings" fall off intact. The fruit ripening is slow and lasts about 18 months after flower pollination. The fruits are acorns 3-4 cm long and their diameters are 2-3 cm long, which are placed inside a rigid scales shell called "cupola". They ripen early in the winter and are distributed by rodents, jays and other birds. In contrast to the long maturation time, their germination ability is limited, and they can germinate only in the first winter after they ripen.

Pistacia Palaestina

The *Pistacia Palaestina* is a tree of the anacardiaceae family. It is a deciduous, dioecious tree that reaches a height of about 10 meters lives a long life, up to hundreds of years. During the blooming and flowering that occurs in the spring, the tree stands out in its red color, which changes to green as the leaves mature. An oak leaf has feathers and a rounded leaf axis. All the wood parts contain a resin similar to that of the mastic tree called "mastic" and so all the wood resin of these trees are called by this name. The *Pistacia Palaestina* is common in Mediterranean groves, throughout the Middle East, and they usually appear in the vicinity of common oak trees.

Spiny Broom

A thorny bushy branch of the papilionoidea family that reaches a height of 180-100 cm. It is one of the most common plants in the Mediterranean region. The shrubs proliferate especially in areas where the natural woodlands are cut, therefore it is considered to be the main component of the Mediterranean garrigue. The shrub is abundant in areas damaged by fire since its seeds sprout more easily after a fire. In addition, after the fire, competition is low, because then the seeds of annuals and other plants are damaged, and only the spiny broom seeds survive. All of its branches have prickly spikes at their edges. The stems from the most recent years are green and assimilate, giving each plant a green color. The leaves are triangular, meaning they each have three leaves that exit from a point. They bloom in the spring and shortly afterwards fall at the end of spring or in the early summer. During the summer the young green branches assume the role of assimilation. These branches are called spartoid branches, and they are characteristic of the Mediterranean and desert climate. The predator protection mechanism of this plant is its thorny branches that make them difficult to eat. Spiny broom flowers are yellow and are mostly pollinated by bees. The fruit is a pod, and it has self-distribution.

Aleppo pine

It is a coniferous, evergreen, pine tree of the pinaceae family. It is the most common species of pine genus in the Mediterranean basin region. The natural distribution of the species is mainly in the western part of the Mediterranean basin. In Israel there are several small natural populations of the species, which are geographically isolated from its main distribution area and it possess a unique genetic profile.

Carob

An evergreen tree of the caesalpinioideae family, which rises to a height of 10 - 15 meters. It is wide and round and distributed in large parts of the Land of Israel, the Galilee, the mountains of Jerusalem and the kurkar ridges. The water content in the carob fruit is particularly low, hence its name (in Hebrew dryness = Horev), although some believe that the name is given by the resemblance of the fruit to the sword. The female carob trees bloom in October, and their smell is known to be unpleasant. The end of maturing occurs in August of the following year, and the fruit are harvested in September-November. Its blossom is red or yellow. The origin of the carob is in the eastern Mediterranean and is also grown in other places for consumption as fruit and for ornaments.

The Mastic Tree

A green shrub of the Pistacia type, which is a common component of groves and garrigues in low Mediterranean regions. The height of the bush is about 0.5 to 2 meters. The leaves and plant contain fragrant resin that drips after injury. In ancient times, it was used for making chewing gum (hence the source of the name, chewing gum in Greek or Phoenician means chewing or to chew), as well as for medicine and as a spice. Synthetic imitation of the material for chewing is used as a major ingredient in chewing gum. Its fruit are laxatives, which contributes to the distribution of his sperm in the droppings of birds. The plant grows in the Mediterranean basin area at the foot of mountains east and west, mainly up to 300 meters high. It accompanies the carob and is found in a large number of soils and rocks.

Pistacia Atlantica

A large tree from the anacardiaceae family. It grows in the Negev, the Lower Galilee and the Hula Valley. The name "Ella" appears more than ten times in the Bible, and the tree lives for hundreds of years. The circumference of its trunk is large and its diameter can reach 2 m. Its height reaches up to 15 m.