

**Subject** / “Exploring Resilience and Recovery: Tu BiShvat and Environmental Stewardship”

**Grades** / High School

**Pedagogies** / Active Learning, Value-Based Learning, Collaborative Learning, Self-Directed Learning

**Required Materials** / Age-appropriate storybooks, Discussion prompts and materials for a Tu BiShvat Seder, Gardening Tools, small tree or seeds.

## Abstract



Students will explore Tu BiShvat in the context of resilience and recovery following the October 7th tragedy. This Jewish "New Year for Trees" will serve as a platform to discuss environmental stewardship in Jewish tradition and modern ecology, interwoven with themes of community healing and rebuilding. Embracing Active Learning and Collaborative Learning, students will delve into the holiday's historical significance, the symbolic value of trees in ecosystems and spiritual life and engage in a Tu BiShvat Seder aligned with themes of resilience. The lesson culminates in planning an environmental project, symbolizing the intertwining of nature's renewal with communal recovery, fostering a profound appreciation for nature and a commitment to proactive environmental and communal restoration.

## Lesson Goals



- Big Ideas:
  1. Resilience and Recovery: Exploring the role of trees and nature in Jewish tradition and their symbolism in the aftermath of the October 7th tragedy.
  2. Historical Reflection and Contemporary Significance: Understanding Tu BiShvat within the broader context of community resilience and rebuilding post-tragedy.
  3. Community Action and Environmental Stewardship: Highlighting the synergy between communal recovery efforts and environmental conservation.
  4. Empathetic Engagement and Collaboration: Encouraging empathetic understanding and collaborative responses to environmental and communal challenges.
  5. Values of Resilience and Renewal: Drawing parallels between the natural resilience of trees and the communal resilience in the face of adversity.

## Essential Questions (Part of Lesson Plan):



- How does the celebration of Tu BiShvat deepen our understanding of resilience and recovery, particularly in the wake of the October 7th events?
- In what ways do trees and nature offer metaphors for healing and rebuilding communities affected by tragedy?
- How can our engagement with Tu BiShvat inspire actionable contributions to both environmental sustainability and community healing?

- What role does collaborative learning play in fostering a resilient response to communal and environmental challenges?
- How can the values celebrated during Tu BiShvat guide us in responding to and recovering from significant communal tragedies like those experienced on October 7th?

## **Part 1: Introduction and Reflection on Rebirth (20 min)**

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- **Objective:** Connect rebirth and renewal themes in Tu BiShvat with resilience and community strength reflections, particularly post-October 7th events.
- **Activity Description:**
  1. Begin with an introduction to Tu BiShvat, highlighting its significance as a festival that celebrates renewal, growth, and the deep connection between people and nature.
  2. Present a selection of inspirational quotes from Jewish tradition that embody resilience, hope, and the power of community. These quotes will serve as a foundation for reflection and discussion.
  3. Invite students to reflect on these quotes and relate them to the concept of rebirth and renewal, both in the context of Tu BiShvat and in the aftermath of the October 7th events. Encourage them to consider how these themes can be applied to personal experiences and communal responses to adversity.
- **Discussion Points:**
  1. Explore how the quotes about resilience and community connect with personal experiences, particularly those related to recent events.
  2. Discuss the ways in which the themes of Tu BiShvat, such as growth, renewal, and the nurturing of life, can inspire a forward-looking perspective filled with hope and unity.

- **Materials and Resources:**

1. Selection of inspirational quotes from Jewish tradition about resilience and community. (See **Equipment Needed**)
2. Writing materials for students to note reflections.

## **Part 2: Historical Significance of Tu BiShvat**

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- **Objective:** Connect the historical roots of Tu BiShvat with modern concepts of resilience and community strength, especially in response to the challenges faced during and after the events of October 7th.
- **Activity:** "Time-Travelers to Tu BiShvat"
  - **Interactive Timeline Creation:** Instead of a straightforward storytelling session, involve students in creating an interactive timeline of Tu BiShvat. This can include key historical events, changing customs, and significant figures related to the festival. (See **Equipment Needed**)
  - **Role-Playing Historical Figures:** Assign students roles as historical figures or citizens from different eras of Tu BiShvat's history. Let them express, in first person, how the festival might have been observed and its significance during their time.
  - **Comparative Analysis with Modern Times:** Guide a discussion that encourages students to compare and contrast historical challenges faced during the formation of Tu BiShvat (The evolution of the holiday) with those of modern times, particularly relating to the October 7th events.. For example, the start of it was more grounded to tithing/tax laws, and also a new year for trees. To being in exile and challenges of observing the holiday. Now connecting to contemporary issues and challenges in parallels to Oct 7th and in general the state of nature/the globe.

### **Part 3: The Ecosystem, Trees, and Recovery**

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- **Objective:** To understand the ecological significance of trees and relate this to the concept of recovery and rebuilding, drawing parallels with the aftermath of the October 7th events.
- **Activity:** "Healing Landscapes: Nature's Recovery Process"
  - Students are divided into small groups to research how ecosystems and trees recover from damage (like wildfires or deforestation). This research will include the natural processes of healing and regrowth in nature.
  - Each group will then present their findings, focusing on the resilience of nature as a metaphor for the resilience of communities rebuilding after the October 7th tragedy.

### **Part 4: Tu BiShvat Seder - A Celebration of Life**

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- **Objective:** Celebrate Tu BiShvat as a symbol of life, continuity, and resilience of both nature and people, especially in the context of recovery from the October 7th tragedy.
- **Activity:** "Seder of Resilience: Embracing Life and Growth"
  - Organize a Tu BiShvat Seder that includes traditional elements (fruits, nuts, grape juice) while integrating readings and songs that focus on themes of strength, growth, and recovery.
  - Dedicate parts of the Seder to commemorating the strength and resilience shown by the communities affected by the October 7th attacks, perhaps through specific readings or moments of reflection.

- **Interactive Elements:**
  - Involve students in preparing the Seder table, encouraging them to contribute personal touches that reflect their thoughts on resilience and hope.
  - Incorporate creative elements such as writing short poems or reflections that can be shared during the Seder.
- **Discussion:**
  - Facilitate a discussion on the symbolism of the Seder elements (fruits, nuts, wine) and how they relate to the cycles of life, resilience in the face of adversity, and the importance of community in the healing process.

## *Part 5: Workshop on Resilience and Growth*

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- **Objective:** Explore personal and community resilience through the metaphor of trees and nature, relating this to overcoming challenges like those faced since October 7th.
- **Activity:** "Growing Stronger: Personal Reflections on Resilience"
  - Start with an explanation of how trees symbolize resilience, growth, and renewal. Discuss how trees withstand various environmental challenges and continue to grow.
  - Ask students to engage in a reflective exercise where they write or create art about their feelings on resilience, inspired by the qualities of trees. They can draw parallels between these qualities and their personal experiences or community responses to the October 7th tragedy.
- **Group Sharing:**
  - Invite students to share their reflections in small groups, discussing how the qualities of trees can inspire personal and communal growth and healing.
  - Facilitate a group conversation about applying these lessons of resilience and growth to support recovery efforts in affected communities.

## Part 6: Planning a Community Project



- **Objective:** Channel the themes of Tu BiShvat and the lessons of resilience into practical actions for community support and environmental stewardship, particularly in response to the October 7th events.
- **Activity:** "Action for Renewal: Community Project Initiative"
  - Initiate a brainstorming session where students propose ideas for environmental or community projects. These projects should aim to support areas affected by the October 7th tragedy or focus on broader environmental sustainability, reflecting the spirit of Tu BiShvat.
  - Guide students to develop a feasible action plan, considering aspects like goals, necessary resources, and potential impact.
- **Collaboration and Planning:**
  - Encourage students to work collaboratively, pooling ideas and skills to create a comprehensive project plan. This might include planting trees in affected areas, organizing community healing events, or environmental awareness campaigns.

### Equipment Needed:

- Inspirational quotes from Jewish tradition for the introduction and reflection activity.

Talmud, Taanit 23a:

אמר לה האי חרובא כמה שנין דאתי ואפיק פירי אמרה ליה עד שבעים שנין א"ל ופשיטא לך דחי  
עד שבעים שנין נותרא אמרה ליה אנא בעלמא אייתי וחזי חרובא דנטעו אבהתי לי כי היכי דנטעו אבהתי  
לי אפני נמי נטעי לבני"

- Paraphrase: "Choni the Circle Maker once saw a woman planting a carob tree... 'How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?' The woman replied, 'Seventy years.' Choni then asked, 'Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?' The woman answered, 'I found carob trees in the world; as my ancestors planted these for me, I too plant these for my children.'"
- Reflection: This story highlights the importance of planting for the future, embodying hope and faith in life's continuity, a key aspect of Tu BiShvat.
- Tehillim:
  - "צדיק, כַּתְמֵר יִפְרֹחַ; כַּאֲרֵז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה".
  - Quote: "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon."
  - Reflection: This verse parallels the resilience and growth of trees with the strength and flourishing of the righteous.
- Rabbi Nachman:
  - אם אַתָּה מְאַמֵּן, שְׂיִכּוּלֵיךְ לִקְלֶקֶל, תִּפְּקוּן שְׂיִכּוּלֵיךְ לְתִקּוֹן
  - Quote: "If you believe breaking is possible, believe fixing is possible."
  - Reflection: Encourages belief in the possibility of repair and renewal, resonating with the spirit of Tu BiShvat.
- Midrash, Kohelet Rabbah:
  - "אִף עַל פִּי שְׁחָרְבַת חֲדָה מִנְחַת עַל צַוָּארֹו שֶׁל אָדָם אֵל יִמְנַע עֲצָמוֹ מִן הַרְחָמִים".
  - Quote: "Even if a sharp sword rests upon a person's neck, he should not desist from prayer."
  - Reflection: Emphasizes unwavering faith and resilience in adversity, themes pertinent to Tu BiShvat and recovery from difficult events.
- Talmud, Masechet Taanit 23a:



"רבי זירא כי הוה בעי לסלוק לארעא דישראל לא הוה יהיב פורענותא ליהודה דהוה אמר בישראל דאמר כל מאן דמסלק לארעא דישראל עובר בעשה שנאמר (במדבר לג, נג) וירשתם את הארץ וישבתם בה שאני אמר כי היכי דליתי בארעא דישראל ליתי תמן אפילו במקום שהזדמן לי כבוד."

- Quote: "Rabbi Zeira, when he wished to ascend from Babylonia to the Land of Israel, avoided the company of Rav Yehuda, who spoke disparagingly of the Land of Israel. For he said: It is better that they go and settle there, even in a state of neglect, than they should remain in Babylonia in a state of honor."
- Reflection: Reflects the commitment and resilience in the face of adversity and the importance of connection to the land, mirroring the spirit of Tu BiShvat and the resilience following the October 7th events.
- Materials for creating an interactive timeline of Tu BiShvat (posters, digital tools). A mind map approach could be used: <https://unitedjed.org/practice-page-mind-mapping/>
- Character sheets or brief biographies for the role-playing activity during the historical segment. Alternatively, a Storytelling approach could be used; <https://unitedjed.org/practice-page-storytelling/>
- Research materials (books, internet access, articles) for the ecosystem and recovery exploration. Google search and school library will need to be used.
- Art and craft supplies for creating visual aids and for the workshop on resilience and growth.
- Fruits, nuts, grape juice or wine for the Tu BiShvat Seder.
- Writing and art supplies for personal reflections and group sharing activities.
- Whiteboards, markers, and project planning templates for the community project planning session.

## *Pedagogies Used:*

- **Active Learning:** This approach is integrated throughout the lesson, particularly in activities that require students to engage with materials, participate in discussions, and collaborate in project planning.
- **Value-Based Learning:** The lesson is rooted in the values of resilience, community, and environmental stewardship, aligning with the themes of Tu BiShvat.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Many activities, such as the interactive timeline creation, group research, and project planning, are designed to promote collaboration among students.
- **Self-Directed Learning:** Students are encouraged to conduct their own research, engage in personal reflection, and contribute creatively to discussions and projects.