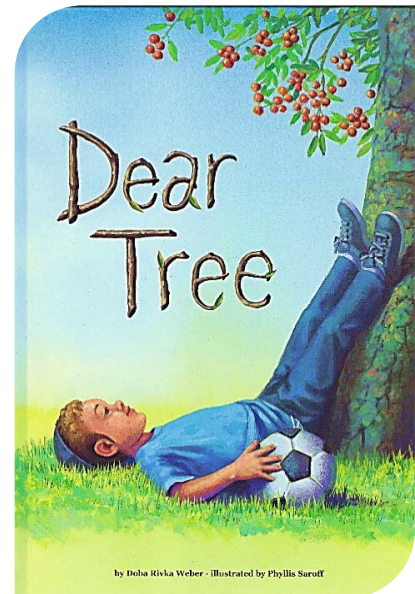


Dear Tree

By Doba Rivka Weber

Program Focus

Age group: Ages 2-6
Time frame: 45-60 minutes
Central value: Caring for the Environment



Synopsis

Every tree needs strong roots, lots of sunlight, and rain. On the Jewish New Year of the Trees (*Tu B'Shvat*), a little boy shares his hopes and wishes for trees—especially for the one which he plays under! Containing bright, realistic illustrations and a simple text, *Dear Tree* is written as a type of birthday card or simple poem, containing a beautiful list of what one child wishes a tree on its birthday.

Goals

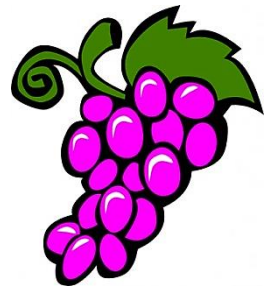
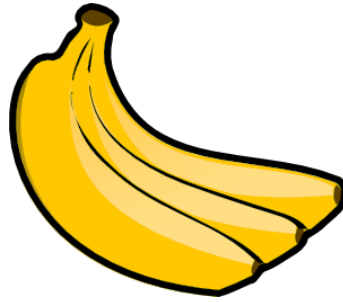
- Help families discover the wealth of contemporary, environmental values embedded within the holiday of *Tu B'Shevat*
- Learn about the values of *Bal Tashchit* (not wasting) and *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world)
- Encourage families to explore simple, effective ways of integrating eco-friendly practices into their daily life

Submitted by

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Plan in advance

Prepare Tree Mobiles



Materials

- For the base (choose one):
 - Large piece of stiff felt
 - Empty seltzer or plastic soda bottle
 - Clothes hanger (metal or plastic)
- Cardboard or foam cut-outs of trees (with one hole punch in each tree)
- Pipe cleaners or colorful string for attaching trees to mobile
- Small plastic beads (optional)
- Markers or pens
- List of “Eco-Friendly Practices for the Home” (see attached)
- For decorating trees:
 - Glue, small bowls, q-tips
 - Tissue paper- cut or torn in small pieces
 - Small leaves, flowers, or fruit cut from construction paper
 - Glitter, white cotton (for winter trees)
 - Paints, stickers (of fruit, leaves, flowers, animals)

Advanced Preparations

1. Prepare the base of the mobile:
 - Cut felt into a spiral shape. Punch holes in the spiral using a hole-puncher.
2. Or, cut off the top third of the soda bottle. Tie a string around the mouth (used for hanging the mobile). Using a hole punch, punch 4-6 holes along the bottom of the bottle.



Prepare Fruit Trees

Materials

- 1/3 to 1/2 of a banana (with peel on)
- Toothpicks
- Variety of fruits (small cubes of apple, pear, peach, variety of berries, grapes, raisins)
- Paper plates

Introduce with an activity

Tu B'Shevat Tree Mobiles

Intro Words

Today, we will be celebrating the Jewish holiday of **Tu B'Shevat**. Tu B'Shevat is known as the birthday or New Year of the trees. It is a day for saying "thank you" to the trees for all that they do for us. In honor of Tu B'Shevat and the trees, we will be making a special tree mobile which you will be able to take home and display. Not only will your mobile be beautiful to look at, but it will also contain a few notes about some special things that you can do at home in order to care of the trees and the world around us. If we follow the actions written on our mobiles, we will be giving the trees the best birthday present of all- a wonderful home to live in.

Directions

1. Select several trees to attach to the mobile.
2. On the back of each tree, parents, in consultation with their children, will jot down one way in which the family will try to care for the trees and /or the environment (see attached "Eco-Friendly Practices" sheet). Feel free to create eco-conservation activities of your own.
3. Have children decorate the front of each tree.
4. Attach a pipe-cleaner or string to each completed tree.
5. Attach the pipe cleaners or strings to the mobile base.



Read the story

Encourage Participation

- Because this book contains very little story, it is helpful to supplement the text with additional activities
- Try using a large cardboard or flannel tree while reading the story.
- Ask children to help you attach various items to the tree as you read about them (birds, fruit, sun, rain, a swing, etc.)
- As you turn each page, ask the children to guess what type of wish is being made. “What do you think the boy is wishing for on this page? Why might a tree need this item?”



Discussion Questions

1. At the end of the book, the boy thanks the trees for doing “so much good for the earth”. How do trees help the earth? How do trees help people?
2. How can we thank the trees for all that they do?
3. How can we make sure that the world remains a good place for trees to live? How can we keep the air and ground clean?
4. The Torah teaches us that it is very important to protect and guard the trees. The Torah tells us that we should try to never cut down a tree. Why shouldn't we cut down trees? How can we limit the number of trees which are being cut down?
5. Not cutting down a tree is known as the mitzvah of *Bal Tashchit* (not wasting). Are there other things in nature and in our lives which we should be careful with and try not to waste? (food, water, electricity, gas...)
6. Can you tell us about one of the actions which you wrote on your mobile? What are you and your family going to do in order to help the earth and the trees?



Follow Up activities and resources

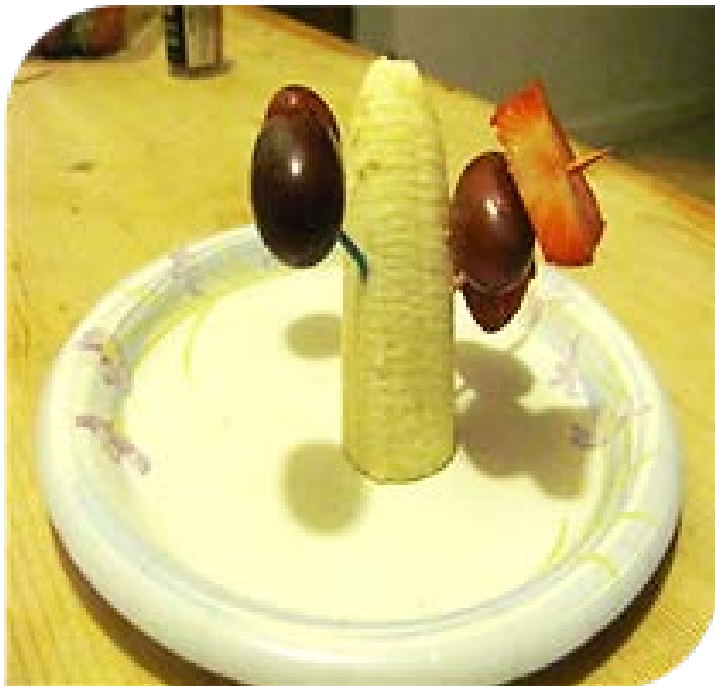
Make Tasty Fruit Trees

Intro Words

So far, we've learned that Tu B'Shevat is a time to say "Happy Birthday" and "thank you" to the trees. One thing that I would really like to thank the trees for is fruit. Does anyone else like fruit? What is your favorite fruit? Today, we're going to make a special snack using fruits which grow in the ground. Before we eat our snack, we need to say thank you to the trees for giving us such delicious fruits. Does anyone know how to say "Thank You" in Hebrew? (It's "Todah")

Directions

1. Place each type of fruit and toothpicks on a separate plate. Ask participants to take a small plate and fill it with one piece of banana, a handful of toothpicks, and several pieces of fruit.
2. Peel the banana.
3. Place one or more fruits on a toothpick.
4. Insert fruit-laden toothpicks into the banana.
5. The Hebrew word for thank you is *todah*. Shout *todah* to the trees, before beginning to eat the banana tree.



Resources for parents, teachers, families

Nurturing the Family

Following the program, try to e-mail each family, thanking them for coming and providing them with websites which will elaborate further on some of the topics discussed during the program. Encourage families to send in photos of their family engaged in the eco-friendly behaviors which they included in their mobiles.

PJ Library Tu B'Shevat Page

<http://pjlibrary.org/parents-and-families/reading-tips-and-resources/jewish-holidays/tu-bshevat.aspx>

Ways to Celebrate Tu B'Shevat – a PJ blog post

<http://pjlibrary.org/pj-blog/index.php/archives/2293/celebrate-tu-bshevat/>

A Seder for Tu B'Shevat – a PJ blog post

<http://pjlibrary.org/pj-blog/index.php/archives/4262/seder-for-tu-b-shevat/>

Green Thumb Training – a PJ blog post

<http://pjlibrary.org/pj-blog/index.php/archives/4267/green-thumb-training-for-tu-bshevat/>

Eco-Friendly Practices for the Home

Read through the following list of family-friendly conservation practices. With your child, select 3 or 4 behaviors that you'd like try at home. Write one activity/behavior on the back of each tree which your child has selected for his/her mobile. Don't feel constricted by this list. Feel free to create your own practices!



1. Grow something that you can eat.
2. Use cloth bags for groceries, snacks, etc.
3. Give up paper towels for one month. Wipe up spills with a towel or rag.
4. Drink coffee at work out of a ceramic mug, instead of a disposable cup.
5. Assign one family member to make sure that all the lights are off in the house before you go out.
6. Put up a sign that says, "Last one out, shut the lights."
7. Don't throw away a piece of paper until both sides are used.
8. During the winter months, put out a saucer with 2 inches of water in it for the birds.
9. Make a bird-feeder out of recycled materials. Remember to refill the feeder when it's empty.
10. Remember to turn off the tap while you are brushing your teeth.
11. Use re-useable containers rather than wrapping food in aluminum or plastic.
12. Once a week, walk to do an errand rather than drive.
13. Wrap presents in newspaper or brown bags that you recycle and decorate.
14. Clean with green cleaning products (sprinkle baking soda on a sponge and scrub away!).