

The Heart-Shaped Leaf

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{ Do all living things have feelings? }

Trees Are Family

Jewish law holds special protections for trees. According to the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), we are not allowed to pick a tree's fruit during its first three years. (In the fourth year, the fruit is a gift to God; from the fifth year on, chow down!) This is good agricultural practice that produces better fruit in the long run, but it also shows an understanding of the "heart" of a tree, which is a living being in its own right. *Tu B'Shevat*, also known as the birthday of the trees, is an ancient holiday that used to help farmers keep track of how old their trees were and which fruit could be brought as an offering to the Temple in Jerusalem. Today the holiday reminds us that we humans depend upon trees — and the rest of the plant world. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/heartshapedleaf.

A Two-Way Street

Trees give so much to us, in so many ways. In this story, Alona is nourished by an apple and protected from rain by a leaf. When we humans are at our best, we also give back to the trees by planting them, caring for them, and protecting the environment that we all share. On Tu B'Shevat and all year round, our relationship with nature is honored and celebrated. Whether by preserving current resources or fostering new growth, it is our responsibility to help sustain the planet that sustains us.

If a Tree Falls...

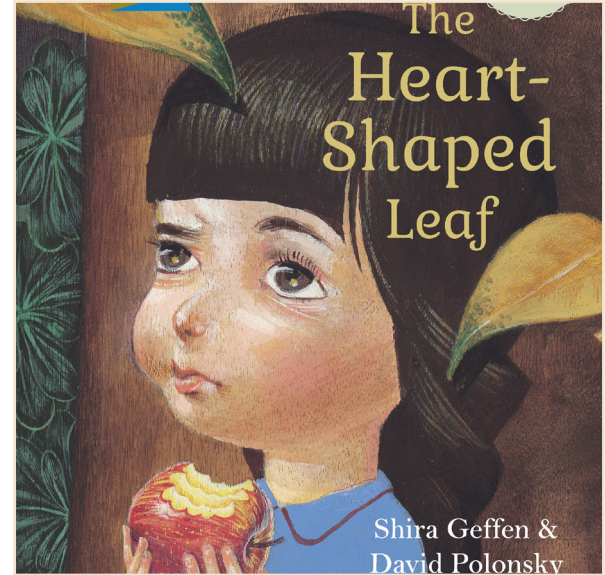
In this book, leaves represent the tree's feelings. The tree cries, laughs, dances, and dreams through its leaves. In Judaism's earliest story about ourselves, the Garden of Eden, it's a tree that helps human beings begin to experience the full spectrum of human emotion. When Eve eats the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, a new world is born, one filled with complex feelings, creativity, and even mortality. Is a leaf helping Alona step further into the world of feelings?

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

Alona talks to the tree, wind, and rain as if they can understand her. If you were talking to the tree, wind, and rain, what would you say?

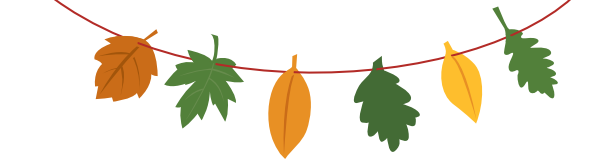
Do you think trees have feelings? How can you tell?

When you look at the picture of the tree in Alona's soup, can you see its face? How do you think the tree feels?



HANDS ON!

Make Leaf Art



If trees cry, laugh, dance, and dream through their leaves, they probably make art through them, too. Gather leaves from outdoors — or, if leaves are not readily available, cut out your own with construction paper — and beautify your home the way a tree would.

- 1 String multiple leaves together with yarn to make a garland.
- 2 Collect different sizes and shapes of leaves, then glue them together to make animal shapes. Use a marker to add tails, ears, and faces.



- 3 Use a glitter pen to draw designs directly on a leaf.

