

Teacher guide for Happy Birthday, Trees

(written by the PJ Library)

Book written by Karen Rostoker-Gruber

“The Jewish holiday of Tu B’Shevat, also known as the Birthday of the Trees, celebrates the critical role that trees play in life.”

Jewish concepts:

“Trees and the environment have particular importance in Jewish thought. From the very beginning of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) we are taught to respect all things that grow, as Adam is placed in the Garden of Eden to “keep it and watch over it.” (Genesis 2:15) The value of *bal tashchit*, which translates from the Hebrew as “do not destroy,” has become the Jewish ecology mantra. Put into action, this concept means we are all partners in preserving the beauty and sustainability of our world.”

“Traditionally, Jews eat the fruit of a tree only after it is three years old. The 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat, called Tu B’Shevat, became the trees’ birthday to help people determine when to first harvest their fruit. This holiday is gaining significance today as the Jewish Earth Day.”

Questions to consider when reading:

"What are the various ways you can make a tree happy on its birthday?"

"How would you celebrate a tree’s birthday?"

Using this book:

This book shows you how to plant a tree. Can you plant a small tree?

“Early in the Torah we read that every plant with seeds is ours for eating. The next time your family eats fruits or vegetables, set aside the seeds to examine. With your little ones’ participation, make a comparison chart of the foods you eat and their seeds or pits. Try sprouting some of these seeds—who knows what you might grow!”