



GUARDING AND  
*Gardening*

Tu B'Shvat

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## GETTING BACK TO THE GARDEN

In a world that is increasingly technological, what are fitting ways of engaging our families with the natural world? In a world that increasingly needs our protection, what are fitting ways for us to be guardians of the garden?

When Adam and Eve were created, God placed them in the Garden of Eden, brimming with beautiful trees and natural resources. God instructed them to “work it and protect it” (Genesis 2:15). Ever since then, human beings have been entranced by the beauty of nature and the sustenance it provides us, experiencing the wonder of Creation and a sense of deep interconnectedness with the natural world.

Biblical Hebrew does not have a word for ‘nature.’ Perhaps it’s like the joke that has a fish responding to a question about the water with: “what the heck is water?” Nature was so pervasive that it was hidden in plain sight. But contemporary Hebrew uses ‘*teva*’ for nature. It comes from the Hebrew for ‘imprint.’ Perhaps it implies that while not everything in nature is like a human being, made in the image of God, nature nonetheless is imprinted with Godliness and wisdom.

However, respecting the natural world and understanding our place in it has been an ongoing challenge. In today’s world, it seems no coincidence that God’s guidance to humanity began with telling us that our role is to guard the garden. What is the right way to enjoy this world? How can we guard our tendency to take it for granted, or to carelessly waste natural resources and harm the world around us? How can we be responsible stewards of this great gift we have been given? And how might we do so as moms, while also tending to our inner garden?

**As you read through and discuss this unit, ask yourself these questions:**

- *How can our family be nurtured by the natural world?*
- *How can we join in caring for the environment? How can we be a force helping our community to protect the earth for our children and grandchildren?*
- *What ways might our family root our eating practices in Jewish values and how could that benefit the environment, as well as our own spiritual development?*

# CARING FOR THE GARDEN – GARDEN GUARDIANS

How might our life style help us to leave the places in which we live in better shape for our children's generation?

When God created Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden, he was given responsibility for the garden. The rabbis elaborate on this in the Midrash, a compilation of rabbinic interpretations of the Torah. They emphasize that the health of the natural world is ultimately up to human beings.

## Genesis 2:15

God took the Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and protect it.<sup>2</sup>

טו וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת-הָאָדָם וַיִּנְחָהוּ בְּגֶן-עֵדֶן לְעֲבֹדָהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ.

- The Torah uses the words *le'ovdah ve'le'shomra* “to work it and protect it”, when describing the human role in the Garden of Eden. How do these two words relate to how you see your role in relation to the environment?
- What do you already do that expresses this charge?

## Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

When God created the first human being, God led him around all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said: “Look at My works! See how beautiful and glorious they are! For your sake I created them all; see to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world, for if you do, there will be no one else [other than you] to repair it.”

בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון נטלו והחזירו על כל אילני גן עדן ואמר לו ראה מעשי כמה נאים ומשובחין הן וכל מה שבראתי בשבילך בראתי, תן דעתך שלא תקלקל ותחריב את עולמי, שאם קלקלת אין מי שיתקן אחריך

- What does “do not spoil and destroy” the world mean?
- How might we share this responsibility with our children?
- Role play a conversation 25 years from now in which your children are reflecting with their peers about our generation's stewardship of the planet. Add something you'd want them to see about their own family and parents.

# THE BEST CITIES

If you were to make a short list of what makes a good town or city to live in, what would be on your list? What city or town has inspired you?

The rabbis in the Jerusalem Talmud shared their thoughts by considering a city's "must have" items; items so essential that without them it would be forbidden to live in that city. As you read this piece of Talmud, ask yourself what message Rabbi Yossi was trying to add to the discussion.

## Jerusalem Talmud, Kiddushin 4:12

Rabbi Hezekiah and Rabbi Kohen in the name of Rav said: It is forbidden to live in a city which has no healer, no bathhouse and no court which administers punishment and prison sentences. Rabbi Yossi said in the name of Rabbi Bon: It is even forbidden to live in a city which has no vegetable garden.

ר' חזקיה רבי כהן בשם רב אסור לדור בעיר שאין בה לא רופא ולא מרחץ ולא ב"ד  
מכין וחובשין. אמר ר' יוסי בי ר' בון אף אסור לדור בעיר שאין בה גינותא של ירק.

Research has confirmed Rabbi Yossi's point, finding that taking a stroll in nature is good for your mental health and supports relaxation and sleep<sup>1</sup>. But even without leaving your home you can benefit. Researches in the UK found that just looking at gardens from within your home can reduce strength and frequency of cravings for alcohol, cigarettes and unhealthy food<sup>2</sup>.

- *Why do you think the rabbis of the Talmud highlighted those particular facets of a community which they listed?*
- *Share an experience in which being in a garden or in nature locally added to your life and experience of the world or share your family's favorite ways of spending time in nature locally in your community.*
- *How might you reorganize your week for more time in or viewing the natural world?*

1 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0169204614002941> and <https://www.mnn.com/health/fitness-well-being/blogs/how-walking-in-the-woods-benefits-your-health>

2 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1353829218308451?via%3Dihub>

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# THE HOLINESS OF EATING

By Dr Ronit Ziv-Kreger<sup>1</sup>

Remember what happens right after Adam is placed in the Garden of Eden to work the land and protect it? He is told they can eat from any of the beautiful trees - except for one, the Tree of Knowledge.

We know how that story ends... Chasidic master, Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen teaches that since humanity's first 'missing of the mark' was through food, then it is also through food that humanity's fixing – *tikkun* – can happen. Many of the Chasidic masters speak of the importance of how we relate to food. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, in the text on this page, says that we may think we are eating to have the energy to do other things like study Torah, but actually, we study Torah in order to gain understanding about eating. Eating is that important. In the human body, the organ with the largest interface with the outside world is not the skin but is our digestive tract!

So, is food just food? If there were spiritual magnifying glasses might we be able to see that this seemingly mundane aspect of life harbors powerful spiritual opportunities?

Our interactions with food show how we integrate the blessings we have been given, and what we do with them. Food becomes a prism for viewing how we host others, discipline our food choices, care for the needy and the environment, fairly distribute food, eat what is fit and kosher, and many more values.

These issues speak deeply to mothers. Much of a parent's life can revolve around preparing meals, packing lunches, and finding

the precise snacks our children will actually eat. Even when our children are more self-sufficient in the kitchen, family and holiday meals are lynchpin rituals that provide special memories and connections for the entire family. *What would it mean to think about eating as more than just an opportunity to consume delicious calories – and instead think of it as an opportunity for mindfulness, spirituality and care for others and our world?*

Recall the teaching mentioned above from Rebbe Nachman where he brings focus to the spiritual dimensions of eating, or the fulfillment of other physical needs, viewing them as not just a meal or a mundane activity but a potential holy act.

Try to turn the fulfillment of your physical needs to a spiritual experience. There are people who eat to gain strength for learning the word of God (Torah).

Others, who are more spiritually conscious, learn God's word in order to know how to eat.

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נסה להפוך את מילוי צרכיך הגופניים לחוויה רוחנית. יש אנשים האוכלים בכדי לאזור כוח ללמוד את דבר האלוהים. אחרים, המודעים יותר לרוחניותם, לומדים את דבר האלוהים על מנת לדעת כיצד לאכול

**Rebbe Nachman of Breslov** (1772-1810) was a Chasidic master and founder of the Breslover Chassidic movement.

Adapted from Ronit Ziv-Kreger © 2008



## Writing Exercise

Give yourselves 5 minutes to write down your thoughts in response to the following prompts. Write in silence, allowing your thoughts to flow freely, unedited. When you are finished writing, share something from your experience of writing and the ideas that came up for you with a partner.

- *What is my current relationship with food and eating?*
- *What might it mean to think of eating as a spiritual experience?*
- *How does our family food choices reflect our values?*
- *How might our food choices include guarding the garden (eating local, or reducing food waste, limiting meat consumption, or hosting people in need)?*
- *What is my vision for what is possible in terms of my relationship with food and eating?*
- *What holds me back?*
- *What is one piece of advice I can give myself to help me grow in my relationship with food and eating?*
- *Are there other physical needs whose fulfillment I consider or want to consider in terms of a spiritual experience?*



## BLESSINGS FOR FOOD

One way Judaism guides us to be sensitive to the miracles of food and eating is by inviting us to take a moment, to consciously pause before eating, and make a blessing.

English	Transliteration	Hebrew
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### For Bread

*This blessing is said first and includes all other food eaten as part of the meal*

Blessed are You, <i>Adonai</i> , our God, Master of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.	<i>Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam hamotzi lechem min haaretz.</i>	ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, המוציא לחם מן הארץ
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### For Grains

*This blessing is also for grapejuice*

Blessed are You, <i>Adonai</i> , our God, Master of the Universe, Who creates various kinds of sustenance.	<i>Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam borei minei mezonot.</i>	ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא כייני מזונות
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English	Transliteration	Hebrew
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### For Wine

*This blessing is for grains that are not bread –  
pasta, crackers, cakes...*

Blessed are You, <i>Adonai</i> , our God, Master of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.	<i>Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri hagafen.</i>	ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי הגפן.
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### For Fruit

*This blessing is for produce that grows on trees*

Blessed are You, <i>Adonai</i> , our God, Master of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the tree.	<i>Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri ha'etz.</i>	ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי העץ.
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English	Transliteration	Hebrew
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## For Vegetables

*This blessing is for produce that grows in the grownd*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Master of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the earth.	<i>Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri ha'adama.</i>	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרִי הָאֲדָמָה.
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## Anything Else

*This category includes fish, eggs, dairy, meat, drinks (besides wine), candy & other processed food*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Master of the Universe, by Whose word all things came to be.	<i>Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha'Olam shehakol nihiya bid'varo.</i>	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבְּרוֹ.
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## TU B'SHVAT

### BEAUTY BEYOND WHAT MEETS THE EYE

Tu B'Shvat, the 15th day of the Jewish month of Shevat, celebrates the New Year for the trees. While the middle of winter seems to be an unlikely time to celebrate trees, Tu B'Shvat actually marks the time that sap first starts rising in trees in Israel, well before we see any outward blooming. This focus on inner potential, even when it is invisible to the naked eye, teaches us that there is much more to life, and to each and every one of us than what is immediately apparent. On Tu B'Shvat, Jewish communities the world over have the custom to eat the seven species for which the Land of Israel is especially praised: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates. In enjoying fruit, how and with whom might you pause to appreciate all the beauty, care, and love imbued in the sun-soaked fruit, in celebration of Tu B'Shvat?





“If not for the trees, human life could not exist.”  
-Midrash Sifre Deuteronomy 20:19

### Did You Know?

Some Statistics from the Jewish National Fund - *Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael*:

Israel is one of only two countries in the world that entered the 21st century with a net gain in its number of trees. Remarkably, there were no natural forests at the founding of the modern State of Israel; its forests are completely hand planted.

Since it was established in 1901, JNF has planted more than 240 million trees all over the State of Israel, providing luscious belts of green covering more than 250,000 acres.<sup>3</sup>

- *Why are trees so important? How might we bring the tree-planting ethic modeled by JNF and their donors to our communities?*

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.jnf.org/work-we-do/our-projects/forestry-ecology/>





# STEWARDING NATURE'S GIFTS

## USE WITHOUT ABUSE - *BAL TASCHIT*

Climate change has heightened the focus of many on the need to carefully steward the natural world.

Jewish sources tell us that we are commanded not to waste or destroy natural resources. In the Torah, we learn this mitzvah from the laws of war in regard to fruit trees. Later authorities explain that this mitzvah applies in all places, and extends beyond fruit trees to include the many physical blessings we have been given.

### Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:19

“When in war against a city where you besiege it for a long time to capture it, you must not destroy (“lo taschit”) its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you may not cut them down.”

Others, who are more spiritually conscious, learn God’s word in order to know how to eat.

כי-תצור אל-עיר ימים רבים להלחם עליה לתפסה לא-תשחית את-עצה לנדה עליו  
גרזן כי מפגנו תאכל ואתו לא תכרת

### Maimonides, Mishneh Torah Laws of Kings Chapter 6: 8, 10

This prohibition applies not only to a city under siege, but rather to every place: it is prohibited to cut down a fruit tree to destroy it. You can trim the tree if it is harming other trees, harming someone else’s field, or if it is very valuable. The Torah prohibits only destroying.

And this prohibition applies not only to trees; but whoever destroys vessels, tears clothes, destroys a building, obstructs a wellspring, or wastes food in a destructive way. All transgress the mitzvah of “*bal tashchit*.”

- *What are three positive things your family can start doing to minimize waste of natural resources?*
- *What are three things your family can stop doing to minimize waste of natural resources?*
- *What can you and your family do to bring the message of bal tashchit to your greater community?*

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# LEARN WITH YOUR SISTER SPOTLIGHT ON ISRAELI INNOVATION

Watch the following 12 minute, beautifully produced, video of Israeli innovations related to protecting the world around us:

<http://bit.ly/2k1GAdc>

- Which of these stories did you find of special interest?  
Which could you share with others?

## Let there be light: The inspiring story of solar power in Israel's Arava Desert<sup>4</sup>

"We are standing in the middle of the Syrian-African rift," Energiya Global's CEO Josef Abramowitz shouts excitedly to our small group of environmental writers. He spreads his arms wide. To the east I can see the mountains of Jordan, to the west the cliffs leading northwest to the Negev desert and the Ramon crater of Israel. A vast valley separates the two sides, stretching north toward Syria and south to the Red Sea. It is hot, dry, and very sunny.

"This is a place for big messages, where ethical revolutions begin," he sings out, launching into a quick history lesson on the ancient events that have occurred in this inhospitable place, from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to Moses and the wandering Israelites to countless others.

Now . . . another chapter has begun in this part of the world, one that will, hopefully, play a key role in halting climate change.

Energiya Global is a company that develops affordable solar projects worldwide. Their first solar field is located just outside a community called Kibbutz Ketura in Israel's Negev Desert. The enormous solar field is also the first commercial-scale solar field in the Middle East. It was launched in 2014 and generates 40 megawatts of power – enough to power one-third of the nearby city of Eilat's daytime power.

The entire Arava region, which stretches from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea, currently generates 70 percent of its power needs, and will exceed 100 percent by 2020, including the port city of Eilat. But, as Abramowitz points out, "Israel should be 100 percent solar by day. This could be the blueprint for all of Africa, and more."

Solar is now a fraction of the cost of diesel, and entirely green. Energiya shows that a business model can change the world, with a quadruple bottom line that makes everyone happy – decent returns for investors, humanitarian benefits, environmental benefits, and smart geo-strategy.

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from: Martinko, Katherine. "Let there be light: The inspiring story of solar power in Israel's Arava Desert." Treehugger, 10 Jan. 2017. Web 17 Jan. 2017. essed January 16, 2017). Used with permission.



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Solar has even bridged gaps between Palestinians, Israelis, and Jordanians, many of whom work as partners on projects.

On the day of our visit in mid-December, we stayed in the solar field until the light was “just right” and the mountaintops over turned purple in the setting sun. Then we all sat under the palm trees, sipping sweet mint tea and eating dates, watching the full moon rise over the silvery solar panels in the distance. From that vantage point, finally, the future looked blessedly golden.

Energiya also has partnership projects with African countries. In Rwanda, Energiya partners with the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village (ASYV), which was inspired by Israel’s “Youth Aliyah” villages from the State’s first decades. The Youth Village is home to 500 children who have either lost their parents or whose families cannot take care of them. The Youth Village provides a safety, education, and helps the children develop real-world skills. By 2018, the Energiya-ASYV project would generate 10% of Rwanda’s electricity, with the Youth Village itself receiving a portion of the profits.



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## LEARN WITH YOUR SISTER MAKING CLEMENTINE LANTERNS<sup>1</sup>



Awaken your senses and your creativity by looking at the gifts of nature in a new way. Creating a mini-clementine lantern will help you to celebrate bounty and the Tu B'Shvat holiday by bringing the outdoors in, and savoring the seasonality of a much-beloved fruit. Lanterns can be used to lend a sweet aroma to any room, to enhance a Tu B'Shvat seder, or as a tool to reflect while journaling.

### **Materials:**

- Clementines (including skin and pulp!)
- Paring Knife
- Olive Oil
- Fire-proof dish/coaster

<sup>1</sup> Jacqueline Serebrani-Kesner is an interdisciplinary and expressive arts educator. More about Creative Arts Enrichment can be found at [www.creativeartsenrichment.org](http://www.creativeartsenrichment.org). Jacquie can be reached at [jserebrani@gmail.com](mailto:jserebrani@gmail.com)

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**Instructions:**

- Carefully score the perimeter of a clementine, just close enough to see the fruit. Do not cut through the fruit itself.
- Remove the peel, half at a time, by slipping your finger between the peel and the fruit.
- Put aside the center strand of pulp. This will serve as your wick.
- Use a paring knife to cut out a design on the top half of the clementine.
- Put the clementine on a fireproof coaster/plate. Add olive oil, only until the fruit is  $\frac{1}{4}$  full. Add the wick, and drizzle a small amount of olive oil over it, then light it.
- Place the cut out top of the clementine over the flame. Make sure that the flame is not obstructed; if it is, it won't burn!





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## TRY IT OUT

### PRACTICAL TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Ideas for bringing the value of protecting the world around us, *l'ovdah ul'shomrah*, into your family life.

#### For Yourself or with a Partner

- Check out the articles, videos, and podcasts on [MomentumUnlimited.org](https://momentumunlimited.org)
- Select a phrase that inspires you, write it on a card and place it where you'll see it. Repeat the phrase to yourself a few times each morning with enthusiasm. Phrases you could consider:
  - I eat mindfully, appreciating the spiritual blessing food is.
  - I breath in, nourished by the natural world, I breath out, smiling.
  - I accept God's mission to protect the world around me.
  - I remember to enjoy and to guard the garden.

- Consider including in your clothing and fashion forays clothing swaps, donating clothes, second-hand shopping, and prioritizing natural materials. According to *Forbes* "The apparel industry accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions and remains the second largest industrial polluter, second only to oil." To read more about this, see: <https://hazon.org/its-time-to-slow-down-our-fast-fashion/>

#### For Families with Children of All Ages

- **At buffets** or when served family-style... take small portions and go back for seconds! Many of us and our kids have eyes that are bigger than our stomachs. Throwing away or wasting food is squandering.
- **Organize** a clothing swap in your community. There is great value in re-cycling clothing and accessories. Aside from the environmental value, it is a wonderful social opportunity and

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a way to purge your closet of that fabulous outfit that never quite fits...

- **Have the kids organize toy swaps.** Besides helping the environment and clearing out your home of unwanted toys, it helps children lose the 'hoarding' impulse, while feeling good about themselves as well.
- **Plant a garden** (containers work well on balconies too) as a family. Begin with easy-to-grow basil. Then teach the family how to make Pesto at the end of the season. Make lots and do a family activity for jarring and labelling creatively so the kids can give them as gifts when they visit their friends' homes. Gardening teaches patience and can be the gift that keeps on giving!
- **To celebrate Tu B'Shvat**, serve the seven species of the Land of Israel (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates). If you are feeling ambitious, have a family Tu B'Shvat

Seder (check out the Hazon Family Tu B'Shvat Seder at <http://bit.ly/2jlmquP>).

- **Watch the BimBam video:** "Honi Comes Full Circle: A Tale for Tu B'Shvat" with your elementary school-age children (<http://bit.ly/1BMfmwp>), and the Shaboom video: "Bal Tashchit: Waste Not! Why Recycling Is So Important" (<http://bit.ly/2jWb7s6>) with your preschool-age children. At the dinner table, talk about how to use objects in the right way, and how it would be considered *bal tashchit* to use them for purposes for which they are not intended. For example, if you take a leaf or a napkin and rip it simply out of boredom, it is transgressing *bal tashchit* because that is not what those things are made for. Go around the table and have each person choose an object and give an example of how they

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could use it in a productive way, and how they could use it in a non-intended way that would be a case of *bal tashchit*.

### For Families with Older Children

- View the film Sustainable Nation (<https://bit.ly/2M8MzgX>) with your family; discuss the impact Israel's work in sustainability is having around the globe. Note: Sustainable Nation will be available on Amazon Prime for rental or purchase in May 2020.
- **Watch the following** 12 minute, beautifully produced video of Israeli innovations related to protecting the world around us: <http://bit.ly/2k1GAdc>
- **Invite your kids** to do a garbage inventory every day for a week, and then meet as a family where the kids present their findings and you all discuss how to minimize household waste.
- **At the dinner table**, tell your family the following story and discuss it: Two people were fighting over a piece of land. Each shouted that the land was his. Finally, to settle their differences, they called for their teacher and agreed to abide by whatever decision she gave them. The teacher listened carefully to the first man, and then to the other. She announced the question she was about to solve: "To whom does the land belong?" The men agreed, "That is the question!" "Since the question concerns the land," the teacher said, "Let's hear what the land has to say." The two men walked the teacher to the disputed land. To the men's surprise, the teacher put her ear to the ground and listened. Nodding her head thoughtfully, she said: "I have listened to the land, and it says it belongs to neither of you." "What!?!!" shouted the men in unison. "The land says that you belong to it," the teacher told them. (Lightly adapted from Hazon Family Tu B'Shvat Seder for School-Age Children, <http://bit.ly/2jlmquP>).
- **Examine** the wonderful environmental life hacks and eco-conscious ideas at <https://bit.ly/2XPtLGj>.





 Use this chart to plan and track your progress regarding protecting the world around us, *l'ovdah ul'shomrah*

## Acknowledgment (*Vidui*)

Where are you with the value of protecting the world around us? What examples come to mind? How have things been for you in terms of how you've related to caring for the natural world? What have been strengths and challenges?

## Vision (*Kavanah*)

How would you like it to be? What gets in the way and what can you do to reorient toward your best self?

## Goals (*Kabbalah*)

What are some small, actionable steps that you can do in your daily life, that are realistic and you could easily schedule, and will support you in growing toward your potential and vision in terms of your responsibility toward the natural world?

## Accountability

Who can help hold you accountable on your goals? How? When?  
What evidence can you collect to know you are making progress?



## FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

In this session we explore the value of *l'ovdah ul'shomrah*, protecting the world around us.

### The Guiding Questions in this Unit Are:

- *What are my obligations to the environment?*
- *How can rooting my family's eating practices in Jewish values benefit the environment, as well as our own spiritual development?*
- *What can my family do to take better care of the environment? How can we be a force for change to help others in our community take responsibility for the natural world?*

### Meaning-ful Vocabulary

Human	<i>Adam</i>	אָדָם
Topsoil or land	<i>Adama</i>	אֲדָמָה
Don't destroy	<i>Bal Tashchit</i>	לֹא תַשְׁחִית

### Facilitating the Session

#### 1. Seek Participant Input

In advance, invite a few sisters to take a small role in leading the session such as:

- Planning an activity to accompany the study session (see **Extras! Program Ideas.**)
- Hosting the event
- Co-facilitating a conversation about food and eating. If you have a participant who is a therapist and deals with these issues, she would be a great person to include for this part of the conversation.
- Researching and presenting ideas to the group about environmental practices that participants could adopt and incorporate into their family lives.
- Ask if one or more of the women would like to share a way she brought home the learning from your last gathering.

**\*\*Involving participants helps them take ownership over their learning and prepares them to take the lead in their family and community!**

## 2. Choose Your Session Activities (in advance)

You know what will best engage your participants and what are their personal and parenting goals for growth and development, so tailor the session to their interests and needs. **Soul Sparks** activities carry a particular power, and we encourage you to include them where possible.

## 3. Prep Your Space

Before the session begins, prepare the room by helping the hostess put out a spread of food and drinks that feature the Seven Species of the Land of Israel (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates). At the beginning of the program, tell participants about these Seven Species, and consider leading them in blessings for different foods.

*Arrange the space or seating to support connection. Think about what materials you will need and make sure you have everything prepared.*

## 4. Welcome & Warm- Up

Make a ritual of transitioning your participants from their hectic, everyday lives to your safe space of learning and growth. Consider engaging your participants in a short stretching exercise or focusing on deep, relaxing breaths.

## Reminder! Sisterhood Safe Space

Remind everyone that you are in your Sisterhood Safe Space of confidentiality and compassionate listening, free of judgment and unsolicited advice.

## 5. Intro & Inspiration

Talk about Tu B'Shvat! Enjoy the seven species together, if you have not already done so. Emphasize that Tu B'Shvat actually marks the time that sap first starts rising in trees, even before we see any outward blooming. This focus on inner potential, even when it is invisible to the naked eye, teaches us that there is much more to life, and to each and every one of us, than what is immediately apparent. You may wish to lead participants in a few moments of silence, focusing on the sap/ potential that is inside of them, even though it is not immediately obvious, and how they hope that potential will be expressed.

## 6. Soul Sparks Activities



There are several different activities in the session that will encourage learning and growth; we suggest choosing one or two for your session. Below are some of our favorites:

### *Caring for the Garden*

Ask women how they inspire their children to care for their home. Or invite them to imagine moving into a new beautiful space with children able to care for it but not inclined to do so. What guidance might they offer? Then, take the women back in time to the first garden in the Torah, the Garden of Eden. Explore God's guidance from the Torah and the midrash using the questions and referring back to the women's ideas. Then move to consider protecting our communal shared spaces and our world.

### *Best Cities*

Read together the excerpt from the Jerusalem Talmud, where the Sages discuss what institutions are required in a city. While the requirements for a healer, bathhouse and court are obvious, Rabbi Yossi's statement that it is forbidden to live in a city with no vegetable garden is surprising. Use the reflective questions to help participants think about their own experiences in a garden, and how it has helped them access a sense of wonder and interconnectedness to nature and those around them.

### *Holiness of Eating*

As parents, we are involved in feeding ourselves and our families. What would it look like if we treated the act of eating as a spiritual act? Read together the Rebbe Nachman quote, and give participants some quiet time to reflect on their relationship with food and eating using the writing exercise. Have pairs share with each other what they discovered in their writing. Remind the women to listen without offering advice and that many people have complicated relationships with food. Then explore as a group turning the challenges with food into a spiritual practice.

## **7. Reflection & Closing**

Recall the main ideas explored in the session and create an opportunity for reflection.

**Reflection Suggestion:** Ask participants to reflect on the following: "What is one takeaway you'll be going home with after our session today?" or "I would like to begin practicing *l'ovdah ul'shomrah* with my family by..."

Invite them to respond to the prompt by writing, drawing, or thinking silently. After individual reflection time, you may ask



your women to partner and share their reflections, which can be followed with group (voluntary) sharing.

Direct the women's attention to the **“Try It Out: Practical Tips and Resources for Families.”** These suggestions will help them bring the learning they have done today home to their families in interesting and fun ways. Encourage them to choose at least one thing they will do with their families and come back next time and report on how it went. Give a brief overview of the rest of the unit.

Provide an opportunity for participants to arrange a time to connect with another sister to continue exploring, reflecting, and offering each other support and accountability. This **“Learn with Your Sister”** activity serves as an entry points for conversations that may never otherwise happen. (See pages XXXXXX) Let all the women know when you'll be meeting again and what theme will be explored.

### Extra! Program Ideas:

To enhance your session and to help each and every participant know the goals that others in the group are working on and aspiring toward, you may want to consider the following:

- We warmly recommend incorporating a 20 minute version of the film Sustainable Nation (<https://bit.ly/2M8MzgX>) with the women and discussing the impact Israel's work in sustainability is having around the globe. A shorter, 20-minute version of the film is available for a licensing fee of \$149 for educational groups. In May 2020, the full film will be available for rental and purchase on Amazon.
- Include a short Tu B'Shvat Seder as part of the session. Several organizations have designed beautiful ceremonies for a Seder Tu B'Shvat, including Livnot U'lehibanot (<http://bit.ly/2j611DX>), the Israel Forever Foundation (<http://bit.ly/2jH9BLd>), and Hazon (<http://bit.ly/2jW19XD>).
- Volunteer with a community garden or a local organization that works to improve the environment.
- Ask a participant or an outside speaker to demonstrate ideas for healthy and environmentally conscious meals and school lunch preparation.
- End the session with a planting activity (you can order seeds from Israel from the Israel Forever Foundation, <http://bit.ly/2jH1yOq>)



The sales of Year of Growth are used entirely to cover costs of creating, producing, distributing, and supporting the successful use of this educational resource.

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