



Tu BiShvat 2022 Text Study

Tu BiShvat Through the Ages from Our Jewish Sources

For Younger Students

Deuteronomy

20:19

כִּי־תָצוּר אֶל־עִיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְשׂוּהָ לֹא־תִשְׁחֵת אֶת־עֵצָהּ 19
 לְגִדּוֹחַ עָלֶיהָ גֵרְזֵן כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכְלֻ וְאִתּוֹ לֹא תִכְרֹת כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה לְבַא
 מִפְּנֵיהֶ בַּמָּצוֹר:

When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, **you must not destroy its trees**, (*ba'al tachsheet*) wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city?

Proverbs

3:17-18

דְרָכֶיהָ דְרָכֵי־נֶעֱם וְכָל־נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם: 17

עֵץ־חַיִּים הִיא לַמְחַזְקִים בָּהּ וְתַמְכֶיהָ מְאֹשֶׁר: (פ) 18

Its ways are ways of pleasantness; and all its paths are peace. It (the Torah) is a tree of life to them that hold on to it; and all its supporters are happy.

Questions for Discussion about Torah texts:

The Torah makes it clear that the earth and trees are important.

- Why do you think trees are not supposed to be cut down, even during a war?
- What can trees provide us?
- The text from Deuteronomy is the origin source text that informs the Jewish value of caring for nature. What else have you learned about Ba'al Tashcheet?
- Why do you think it's important to "not destroy" the environment?
- Why do you think the Torah is referred to as "a tree of life?"
- In what ways are trees in nature similar to the Torah?



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Etz Chayim Ta'anit 7a:12

אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק למה נמשלו דברי תורה כעץ שנאמר: עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה לומר לה מה עץ קטן מדליק את הגדול אף תלמידי חכמים קטנים מחקדים את הגדולים והיינו דאמר רבי חנינא הרבה למדתי מרבתי ומחבירי יותר מרבתי ומתלמידי יותר מכילן

Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: Why are Torah Matters likened to a tree, as it stated: "It is a tree of life to them who lay hold upon it" (Proverbs 3:18)? This verse comes to tell you that just as a small piece of wood can ignite a large piece, so too, minor Torah scholars can sharpen great Torah scholars and enable them to advance their studies. And this is what Rabbi Hanina said: I have learned much from my teachers and even more from my friends, but from my students I have learned more than from all of them.

"*Ta'anit*" is a section of the Babylonian Talmud in the tractate called *Moed*/Holidays. Here the translated words of the Talmud are in **boldface**, and the editors (of this edition) provide the non-bold face text so that we can all better understand meanings.

Here we get more insight about the value of trees, and the meaning of Etz Chayim/Tree of Life from the Talmud.

- According to the Talmud, why is the Torah equated to a tree?
- What does "wood catching on fire" have to do with learners of Torah?
- Do you think that you can learn from your teachers and friends? What do you learn from them?

Modern **And now some words from Israel's (country's) beginnings:**

"The Negev is a great Zionist asset, with no substitute anywhere in the country. first of all it constitutes half of the State of Israel...the Negev is a desolate are which is currently empty of people, and therein lies its importance. What it lacks is water and Jews, it has the potential to be densley populated, even amounting to millions...two million Jews can be settled there with agriculture, and two million with industry."

David Ben-Gurion, from "The Renewed State of Israel" October 6, 1963

David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973) was the Prime Minister of Israel. After his first term in office ended in 1954, he served again as Prime Minister until 1963. By 1970, he retired from politics and moved to the Sde Boker (a kibbutz) in the Negev. It's clear by his life choices that David Ben-Gurion valued living in the Negev. With help from Jewish National Fund, Israel has met many of David Ben-Gurion's dreams. This piece answers why we should develop and live there.

- In your own words, why did David Ben-Gurion think that the Negev is so important?
- Ben-Gurion dreamed of many ways to use the Negev before these technologies were even invented. What do you think inspired his dreams?
- Many of Ben-Gurion's ideas have come true. If he was giving this speech today, what do you think his dreams for the Negev's future would be?
- How do Ben-Gurion's dreams compare with the other texts you have studied today?



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