



Tu BiShvat 2021 Text Study

Biblical Texts for Young People That Make Us Think About Trees

1. (א) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תִּדְשָׂא הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזֶּרַע זָרַע עֵץ פְּרִי עֵשֶׂה פְּרִי לְמִינֹו אֲשֶׁר זָרַע-בּוֹ עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי-כֵן: (יב) וַתּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזֶּרַע זָרַע לְמִינֹהוּ וְעֵץ עֵשֶׂה-פְּרִי אֲשֶׁר זָרַע-בּוֹ לְמִינֹהוּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב: בְּרֵאשִׁית א' י"א-י"ב

(11) And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, **fruit trees of every kind** on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. (12) The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and **trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it**. And God saw that this was good.

Genesis 1:11-12

Questions

- Can you put the meaning of these two verses in your own words? How would you describe this section of this day of Creation? After reading them, do you have any questions about these verses?
- This is in the first chapter of the first book of the Torah. Using a full *chumash*, find out on what day of creation this occurs.
- If verse 11 says, "the earth brought forth vegetation," why do you think it needed to then stress "trees of every kind (in verse 11) and "trees of every kind bearing fruit" in verse 12? What do you think the Torah is telling us about trees?

2. (ט) כִּי-תִצּוֹר אֶל-עִיר יְמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְשָׁהּ לֹא-תִשְׁחִית אֶת-עֵצָהּ לְנֹדֶחַ עָלֶיהָ: גִּרְזֹן כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכַל וְאֵתוֹ לֹא תִכְרֹת כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשֵּׁדָה לֶבָא מִפְּנֶיךָ בַּמָּצוֹר: דְּבָרִים כ"י"ט

(19) 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, 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?

Deuteronomy 20:19



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Questions

- Can you put the meaning of this verse in your own words? How would you describe this law of war from Deuteronomy/D'varim?
- After reading this verse, what questions do you have about it?
- Focusing on the first bolded section: These words are the words that Jewish tradition uses to sum up the relationship between humans and the environment. Why do you think "Ba-al Tashchit/Do not destroy" is used for this reason?
- What's the difference, in your opinion, between using trees for paper or wood, and destroying trees?
- Do the second texts in bold surprise you? Does it surprise you that the Torah asks the question "Are trees of the field human?" Why do you think the Torah asks this question?

3. כָּרוּךְ הַגֵּבֶר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בִּיהוָה וְהָיָה יְהוָה מִבְטָחוֹ: וְהָיָה כְעֵץ | שֶׁתּוֹלַע עַל-מִים וְעַל-
יִבְלֵי יִשְׁלַח שְׁרָשָׁיו וְלֹא יִרָא [יִרְאֶה] כִּי-יָבֹא חֹם וְהָיָה עָלָיו רֶעֶנָּה וּבִשְׁנֵת בַּצֹּרֶת
לֹא יִדָּאָג וְלֹא יִמָּשׁ מִמַּעֲשׂוֹת פְּרִי:

(7) Blessed is one who trusts in the Eternal, Whose trust is the Eternal alone.

(8) They shall be like a tree planted by waters, Sending forth its roots by a stream:

It does not sense the coming of heat, Its leaves are ever fresh; It has no care in a year of drought, It does not cease to yield fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

4. אֲנֹשֵׁי-הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר | לֹא הָלַךְ בְּעֵצַת רָשָׁעִים וּבַדֶּרֶךְ חָטָאִים לֹא עָמַד וּבְמוֹשֵׁב
לִצִּים לֹא יֵשֵׁב: (ב) כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה חֻפְצוֹ וּבְתוֹרַתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וּלְיָלִיָּה: (ג) וְהָיָה כְעֵץ
שֶׁתּוֹלַע עַל-פִּלְגֵי מַיִם אֲשֶׁר פָּרְיוֹ | יִתֵּן בְּעֵתוֹ וְעָלָיו לֹא-יָבֹל וְכָל אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה יִצְלִיחַ:
תְּהִלָּים אֲ-אִי-ג'

(1) Happy is the one who has not followed the counsel of the wicked, or taken the path of sinners, or joined the company of the insolent; (2) rather, the teaching of the LORD is their delight, and they study that teaching day and night. **(3) They are like a tree planted beside streams of water,** which yields its fruit in season, whose foliage never fades, and whatever it produces thrives.

Psalms 1:1-3

Questions

- Can you put the meaning of these two verses in your own words? How would you describe these sections from the "Na'ch/Prophets and Writings"?
- What is similar between the Jeremiah the Psalms texts? How are they different?
- Why do you think that a person who trusts God and follows the correct path is described as a "tree planted by waters?" What are the benefits to describing someone that way?
- What words would you use to describe someone who trusts God and lives his life within Mitzvot?



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