



The Almond Tree Is Blooming

Topic

Tu B'Shevat

Grade Level(s)

1st – 3rd

Big Ideas

Fresh food is a luxury that has not always been available year-round.

The blossoming of fruit trees can be an exciting beginning.

Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Learn a joyous Hebrew song about trees blooming in Israel.
2. Appreciate the bounty of fresh food to which they have access
3. Evaluate the merits of fresh and preserved foods.

Materials / Technology Needed

- Pairs of fresh and preserved foods.
Examples include:
 - Strawberries and strawberry jam
 - Cucumbers and pickles
 - Peaches and canned peaches
 - Bananas and banana chips
 - Remember to account for allergies.
 - Utensils to eat the different foods (e.g. forks, toothpicks)
 - Plates and bowls
 - Buckets and plastic chips of two different colors for voting
 - [Video of Hashkeidiyah Porahat](#) (begins at **1:03** mark) and equipment to show it.
- [Words with translation are included at the end of this document.]

Relevant Vocabulary

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| שְׁקֵדִיָּה (Shekeidiyah) | Almond Tree |
| פֹּרַחַת (Porahat) | Bloom (fem. sing.) |
| שֶׁמֶשׁ (Shemesh) | Sun |
| צִפּוֹרִים (Tzipporim) | Birds |
| חַג (Hag) | Holiday/Festival |
| שֶׁבַט (Shevat) | The Hebrew Month of Shevat |
| הִגִּיעַ (Higi'a) | Entered/Arrived |
| אֵילָן, אֵילָנוֹת* (Ilan, Ilanot) | Tree, Trees |
| עֵץ (Eitz) | Tree |

*אֵילָן is a literary word for "tree," while עֵץ is the more common, everyday word.



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Prepare in Advance

- Set up tasting stations with each pair of food and utensils.
- Place one bucket by each type of food and place small collections of each color of plastic chip at each station.
- Make sure the video plays on your equipment.

Background for Teachers

Tu B'Shevat, the new year for trees, falls on the 15th of the Hebrew month of Shevat. The Sages decided on this date because it is the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the blooming of the trees in Israel (Tractate Rosh Hashanah 14a). The first trees to bloom are the almond trees, and their blooming signals the return of fresh produce to the land.

Today, people can get “fresh” produce in their local markets year-round. However, much of that food either comes from far away or has been kept in storage for extended periods of time. (See [here](#) and [here](#) for examples of how this works.) Before modern food storage and transportation allowed for this kind of access to fresh produce, people would have access to fresh fruits and vegetables only when they were in season locally. Otherwise, they would need to rely on methods such as pickling and drying food to preserve it for consumption throughout the year. The blossoming of the almond tree in Israel was the indicator that fresh fruits and vegetables would be available again soon.

Written in the early 20th century, the song *הַשְּׂקֵדִיָּה פּוֹרַחַת* (*Hashkeidiyah Porahat*/The Almond Tree Is Blooming) has become one of the most enduring Tu B'Shevat songs. The words, written by Yisrael Dushman, celebrate both the joy of the blooming almond trees on Tu B'Shevat and also the work that people will do to keep the land of Israel in bloom. The version included here was sung by Uzi Hitman, who was a beloved singer and songwriter in Israel. Not only did he perform for [children](#) but he also wrote some of the [most popular songs](#) in the Israeli canon.

Description of Activities

1. Ask students what fruits and vegetables they see at the store. Ask students if they know where these items come from. Explain that modern food production and storage methods make sure that these foods are available year-round but that there was a time when people could get fresh fruits and vegetables only when those items were in season locally. (See links in Background for Teachers for more details.)
2. Play the video of *Hashkeidiyah Porahat*.
 - a. Hebrew Option: Students act out the Hebrew verbs in the song.



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3. Ask why it would be such a big deal to celebrate the blooming of the almond tree. Why is it such a joyful occurrence for fruit trees to bloom?
4. Explain that the blooming of the almond tree marks the end of the rain season and the beginning of the produce season in Israel. This is the new year for trees, *Tu B'Shevat*. When food could not be brought from other places or stored for long periods of time, this was what told people that fresh food would be available again soon.
5. Divide students into small taste-testing groups. At each station, students taste the fresh food and the packaged food. Students then vote for which food they like better at each station by placing a colored plastic chip into the container marked for each food (e.g. red plastic chip for fresh strawberries, blue plastic chip for strawberry jam).
6. When students have tried each food, ask which was their favorite. Ask students which they think is more nutritious, the fresh foods or the preserved foods. Explain that fresh food retains more nutrients and that the more a food is processed the more it loses nutrients.
7. Additional discussion points might include:
 - a. What other foods do you eat in a preserved (e.g. pickled, dried) form? [Note that some dried foods have their own names, so they might not be recognized as dried fruits. A common example of this is that raisins are dried grapes.]
 - b. When might fresh food be better? When might preserved food be better?
 - c. Why might it be better to eat preserved local foods than to eat fresh foods from far away? Why might it be better to eat fresh foods from far away than to eat preserved local foods?



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| The Almond Tree Is Blooming | השקדיה פורחת |
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| The almond tree is blooming And the golden sun is shining Birds on top of every roof Herald the coming of the holiday | השקדיה פורחת, ושמש פז זורחת. צפרים מראש כל גג מבשרות את בוא החג: |
| <i>Tu B'Shevat</i> has arrived – Holiday of the Trees (x2) | ט"ו בשבט הגיע – חג האילנות! ט"ו בשבט הגיע – חג האילנות. |
| The land cries out. The time for planting has arrived! Everyone takes for himself a tree, We will all go out with spades | הארץ משועת: הגיעה עת לטעת! כל אחד יקח לו עץ*, באתים נצא חוצץ: |
| <i>Tu B'Shevat</i> has arrived – Holiday of the Trees (x2) | ט"ו בשבט הגיע – חג האילנות! ט"ו בשבט הגיע – חג האילנות. |
| Every mountain and hill is planted From Dan to Be'er Sheva And our land is again inherited Land of the best olive oil and honey | נטע כל הר וגבע, מזן ועד באר-שבע: וארצנו שוב נירש- ארגץ זית יצהר ודבש. |
| <i>Tu B'Shevat</i> has arrived – Holiday of the Trees (x2) | ט"ו בשבט הגיע – חג האילנות! ט"ו בשבט הגיע – חג האילנות. |

*Uzi Hitman changes the words slightly from the original words here. The original words of the song are "כל אחד יטע פה עץ", which means "Everyone plants a tree here".