

Am Nolad: Creation of the Nation

Devarim: Torat *Eretz* Yisrael

Choveret Chinuch Shvat

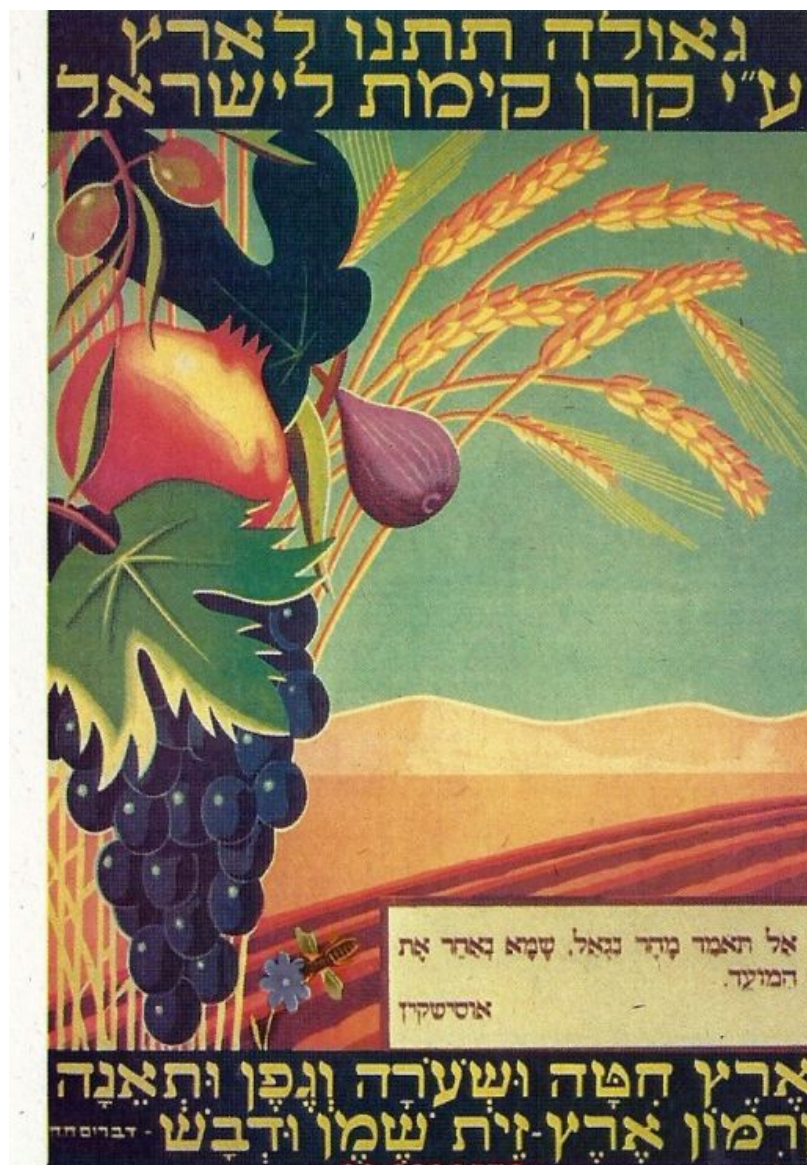


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Introduction

Shalom L'Kulam,

Sefer Devarim is famously referred to as Mishneh Torah, as if it is a repetition of the Torah. The reason for this name is that Sefer Devarim retells many of the stories that happened to the Jewish people while they were in the desert. The reason for this repetition is that Sefer Devarim is Moshe's goodbye speech to Bnei Yisrael. He knows he will not be entering Eretz Yisrael with them so he gives over one last message in which he reminds them of what they have learned in the desert but also prepares them to enter the land. To prepare them for their new life as a nation in Eretz Yisrael, Moshe reminds Bnei Yisrael of the reason why they are entering the land:

וזאת המצוה החקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלקיכם ללמד אתכם לעשות בארץ אשר אתם עברים שמה לרשתה...
ושמעתי ישראל ושמרת לעשות אשר ייטב לך ואשר תרבו מאד כאשר דבר ה' אלקי אבותיך לך ארץ זבת חלב ודבש:

And these are the Mitzvot—the laws and the rules—that Hashem your God has commanded me to tell you, **to keep in the land** that you are about to cross into and inherit...

Listen, Bnei Yisrael, willingly and faithfully, so that it will be good for you and so that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as Hashem the God of your fathers, said.

השמר לך פן-תשכח את-ה' אלקיך לבלתי שמר מצוותיו ומשפטיו וחקותיו אשר אנכי מצוך היום:
פן-תאכל ושבעת ובתים טובים תבנה וישבת:
ובקרך וצאנך ירבו וקסף וזהב ירבה-לך וכל אשר-לך ירבה ורם לבבך ושכחת את-ה' אלקיך...
ואמרת בלבבך כחי ועצם ידי עשה לי את-החיל הזה:
וזכרת את-ה' אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל למען הקים את-בריתו אשר-נשבע לאבותיך כיום הזה:

Take care lest you forget Hashem your God and fail to keep His mitzvot, His rules, and His laws, which I command you today. When you have eaten your fill, and have built fine houses to live in, and your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold have increased, and everything you own has prospered, beware lest your heart grow haughty and you forget Hashem your God... **and you say to yourselves, "My own power and the might of my own hand have won this wealth for me."**

Remember that it is Hashem your God who gives you the power to get wealth, in fulfillment of the covenant that He made on oath with your fathers, as is still the case.

(Devarim Perakim 4 and 8)

In Sefer Devarim, Moshe reminds Bnei Yisrael of the mitzvot they have received from Hashem and introduces new mitzvot that they will only start to observe in the land to remind them that the reason why Hashem chose Bnei Yisrael and brought them to Eretz Yisrael is to serve Him and keep His Torah. Moshe warns Bnei Yisrael that they can't let their success in the land get to their heads and convince them that this is all their doing "כחי ועצם ידי עשה לי את-החיל הזה" but they have to always remember why they are in the land and Who is truly responsible for their success.

The month of Shvat is a time when we focus on the land and agriculture. That is why the topic of this month's choveret is "Torat Eretz Yisrael," one of the 3 pillars of Bnei Akiva's philosophy. The goal of the choveret is to show the connection between the Torah and Eretz Yisrael, remembering that the two are dependent on each other. Bnei Akiva prides itself on being not only a Zionist youth group but a **Religious** Zionist youth group- so through the peulot we will help cultivate an awareness in our chanichim of the importance of Torah and Mitzvot and our connection to the Land of Israel.

Don't forget, this choveret needs YOU to make it successful. Read through the peulot- take out what doesn't work for you and add your own ideas, games, and stories. To edit this packet, click tinyurl.com/choveretdevarim and go to 'File', 'Make a Copy,' and then you will have your own Google Doc to edit.

Bivrachot Chevrei Torah v'Avodah,

Jen van Amerongen
Ariel Shields
Michal Laub

Merakezet Chinuch
Co-Mazkir Artzi
Co-Mazkira Artzi

Am Nolad: Creation of the Nation
Devarim: **Torat Eretz Yisrael**

James Williams
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Director of Administration
Executive Director

Skit

Tzion/a: Hey Z! I'm so excited for vacation, what are you doing?

Z: I'm not sure yet but maybe going back to the Ice Age, it was a pretty chill time- get it? Chill! There were just cavemen and stuff so I'll have a lot of space to myself to hit the slopes- I love skiing. What about you Tzion/a?

Tzion/a: I'm going to Israel! I'm so excited! It's going to be my first time there! We have so much planned!

Z: That is exciting! What are some of your plans?

Tzion/a: It's gonna be awesome- We're going to Eilat where its hot and we're going to go water skiing and swimming. And in the Gush we're going zip lining. And in the North we're going to the chocolate factory, and and and...

Z: That sounds so fun. But what about like the religious stuff?

Tzion/a: Religious stuff? Like the boring stuff? I mean I think we're going to the Kotel, and my moms really excited about going to some famous shul- But I'm not so interested in that stuff.

Z: I hear what you're saying Tzion/a but I think there someone you should talk to before going on your trip- someone who know how to give really good travel advice.

Tzion/a: Sounds good to me!

Together: Lets go! Uka chaki uka chaki uka chaki... SNAP! *spin*

Z: So do you remember how last month we saw Bnei Yisrael in the desert?

Tzion/a: I think you asked me this last month too.

Z: Yeah well they were in the desert for a long time, but they're about to actually go into Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe: So guys, you know that you're about to go into Eretz Yisrael

Bnei Yisrael: [Hold up Cheering sign] Woo!

Moshe: But I'm not going to be there with you

Bnei Yisrael: [Hold up Booing sign] Boo!

Moshe: It's ok, I just wanted to say some goodbyes and give you a little advice before your first time in Israel

Tziona: *turns to Z* Hey, like me.

Z: Exactly

Moshe: I just wanted to remind you of all we've been through together. You have grown so much while in the desert, you've really become a strong nation and gotten through some tough times.

Bnei Yisrael: Woo!

Moshe: But I just wanted to remind you of some things you're going to have to remember when you're in Eretz Yisrael. Remember the Torah and Mitzvot because one day you might be having a lot of fun in Israel- hiking and making chocolate and water skiing- but you have to remember why you're really there.

Tzion/a: What do you mean Moshe?

Moshe: You have to remember that Hashem sent you to Eretz Yisrael to be the best nation you can be, and to serve Hashem and do His mitzvot. And if you forget that, then you've forgotten why you're supposed to be there.

Tzion/a: I think I'm beginning to understand. Z maybe you can help me think of some meaningful activities my family and I can do in Israel.

Z: Sure thing Tzion/a. What about this- do you know about the mitzvah of Leket? Moshe talks about it later in his goodbye speech.

Together: Uchaki uka chaki uka chaki... SNAP!
spin

Tzion/a: I'm not sure I remember, I'll listen to Moshe

Moshe: ...and the Mitzvah of Leket is a mitzvah that you'll start doing when you get to the land. Basically, if you drop any of the food you are harvesting in the field, you have to leave it as tzedaka for poor people to take so they can have food.

Tzion/a: Z, how am I going to do that? I'm not a farmer!

Z: There's actually this really cool organization in Israel called Leket, named after this mitzvah. And they have volunteers, like families on vacation, go to fields and help pick up the fruits and vegetables that were dropped on the ground, and then they donate it to people who need it- Just like the mitzvah of Leket.

Tzion/a: That's pretty cool, I like picking fruit and it sounds like it could be a special way to give back while I'm on vacation.

Z: It's also going to be Tu Bishvat while you're in Israel right?

Tzion/a: Yeah! What can we do for Tu Bishvat?

Z: A lot of people plant trees. It doesn't necessarily seem like something you'd do on a holiday- but it's really important. Because it shows our connection to the land and that you want to help it keep growing.

Tzion/a: Wow! I want to plant my own tree, it would be MY tree in Israel.

Z: Exactly. So why don't we head back home and you can tell your parents about some of these ideas.

Tzion/a: Let's go!

Peula #1: Tzedaka and Eretz Yisrael
Written by Rebecca Siegel, HA Member

Goal: This peula has a two-part goal. The first part is to have the chanichim understand the mitzvot of peah, leket, and shichicha, the different forms of giving tzedakah and why they important. The second goal is to learn about and discuss the concept of tzedakah generally and different ways in which we can give it.

Part 1: Learning about the Mitzvot

Mitzvah #1: Peah

Torah Source:

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field	ויקרא י"ט וּבְקִצְרְכֶם אֶת־קִצִּיר אֲרָצְכֶם לֹא תִכְלֶה פֶּאֶת שְׂדֵךְ
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Discussion points to consider:

- Ask the chanichim if anyone has heard of the mitzvah of peah and if they know what it is
- Explain the general concept from the pasuk above – that a corner of the field is left for the poor

Game: Four Corners (variation)

- Four corners of a room are designated with the numbers 1 to 4
- One chanich/a is chosen to be “it” or the “farmer”
- The farmer sits in the middle of the room and closes his/her eyes or leaves the room and counts to ten
- The other chanichim are “crops” and choose one of the corners and quietly go and stand in that area
- Each round, one corner is assigned as the “peah corner” with a different chanich/a standing there as the “poor person”
- When the farmer has finished counting, he/she calls out a corner of the room to be “harvested”
- If you are a crop and the number of your corner has been called, you have been harvested and are out of the game
- If the farmer calls a corner with no chanichim in it, the round restarts and the chanichim rotate to a new corner
- If the farmer chooses the peah corner, he/she loses, and the poor person becomes the next farmer
- If the farmer gets everyone out besides for the poor person, then he/she wins and plays another round

Mitzvah #2: Leket

Torah Source (second part of the pasuk for peah):

[you shall not]... gather the gleanings of your harvest	וּלְקֹט קִצִּירְךָ לֹא תִלְקֹט
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Discussion Points:

- As above, ask the chanichim what they know about the mitzvah
- Explain that gleanings are dropped crops, which must be left for the needy. If, while harvesting, the farmer drops one or two ears of grain, those are considered leket and may not be picked up. If he drops three or more, it's not leket and he may pick them up.

Article Retrieved from <https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/115707/knesset-passes-food-donation-act/>:

Israel is Fifth Country Worldwide to Pass National Food Rescue Law

By [Tzivya Fox](#) October 24, 2018 , 11:42 am

After ten years of debate, Israel has now become the fifth nation in the world to pass a national food rescue law. “The Food Donation Act” protects food donors, non-profit organization, staff and volunteers from criminal and civil liability should donated food cause any negative consequences to the receivers.

The act, which was led by Member of Knesset (MK) Uri Maklev with support from MK Eli Elalouf, MKs Moshe Gafni, Yechiel ‘Hilik’ Bar, Orly Levi Abekasis, Shuli Mualem and Mordechai Yogev, and in cooperation with [Leket Israel](#) hopes to change the face of hunger in the Holy Land.

The law is meant to protect those who donate food in good faith from being responsible should a person end up eating tainted food. Therefore, only where there is clear criminal activity or obvious and intentional negligence will food donors now be liable.

“In Israel, every third child suffers from hunger and every fourth person from poverty,” Maklev stated, “We have to make an effort to find a solution. There are solutions. Restaurant owners, hotels and organizations should not be throwing away food since destroying food is like destroying the soul.”

Judaism maintains a basic ethical principle, based on Deuteronomy 20:19-20, that one should not destroy wastefully:

“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.”

Known as *ba'al tashchit* (בל תשחית), the sages extended the concept to various other dictates including not destroying or wasting of food.

“The passing of the Food Donation Act is so important to Israel’s impoverished citizens; it benefits organizations like *Meir Panim* that strive to feed those who are hungry with quality food,” said Danielle Rubin, Project Director of [American Friends of Meir Panim](#), to *Breaking Israel News*. “It’s exciting that this bill passed on the heels of World Food Day. We congratulate [Leket](#) for encouraging this bill, as they regularly donate their food surplus to *Meir Panim*’s soup kitchens located throughout Israel.”

The Food Donation Act is similar to the Bill Emerson Act in the United States that absolves food donors, non-profit organizations, staff and volunteers at non-profit organizations from criminal and civil liability, provided they adhere to the Ministry of Health’s food safety requirements. Similar acts are maintained in Canada, New Zealand and Italy, making Israel only the fifth to pass such a bill.

The new law’s explanatory notes highlight the fact that more and more of Israel’s population suffer from food

insecurity, including many children. “1.8 million Israelis suffer from food insecurity while 2.3 million tons of food at a value of NIS 19.5 billion (5+ billion USD) is thrown away annually,” stated Gidi Kroch, **Leket** Israel’s CEO. “The Food Donation Act opens the door to hundreds of organizations and businesses that have quality and substantial amounts of surplus food but do not currently donate out of fear from liability.”

Restaurants, banquet halls, corporate dining rooms, retail chains and hotels, until now, have avoided donating their excess food to people and organizations for fear of civil or criminal liability should their food cause someone to become sick.

According to estimates, this law will triple the scope of food donations and will expand food rescue on a national level. “Food insecurity is a serious problem which, among other issues, increases the social gaps between people, especially children,” continued Rubin to *Breaking Israel News*. “The new law will help provide nutritious food for those in need and also significantly reduce food waste and cost.”

With nearly one fifth of Israelis living with food insecurity and half of all food still fit for consumption thrown out, it is estimated that by rescuing annually just 20 percent of the wasted food in Israel, food insecurity for most people would disappear. Additionally, a recent poll of hotels by the Israel Hotel Association found that some 80 percent of hotels were interested in participating in a food rescue program but withheld doing so for fear of lawsuits.

While trying to push this bill through, Maklev noted, “We see a reality where those with plenty do not know those without. There are many organizations that are interested in donating surplus food, but due to their concerns and fears of liability, they destroy the food rather than donate it to the people who need it most. It is our obligation to help and encourage anyone who wants to donate and not to prevent it.”

“The bill is a clear example of the situation in which disadvantaged populations and children under the poverty line can be assisted by the civil society that wants to help them,” said MK Orly Levi Abekasis. “There is no reason to destroy good quality food when there are hungry families in Israel.”

The report explained that each shekel invested in food rescue provides NIS 3.6 worth of food. Adding in factors such as environmental benefits, this figure doubles to NIS 7.2 for every shekel invested.

Surplus food in the retail and distribution sectors is “inevitable,” the report stated, as retailers are required to ensure a constant availability of food to consumers who will not tolerate a shortage of the food items they want to buy.

“I bless everyone who participated in promoting this law,” shared MK Eli Elalouf, Chairman of the Labor, Welfare and Health Committee. “It is a huge milestone and I am proud to be a partner in this initiative.”

Discussion Points:

- **It is not necessary to read the whole article**, unless the chanichim say they wish to do so. Highlight the important points and give the chanichim specific portions to read out loud
- This act was accomplished with the support of Leket Israel. If you go to their website and click “About Us” this is what is written:

Leket Israel, the National Food Bank, is the leading food rescue organization in Israel. Unique among all other organizations that serve the poor in Israel and food banks worldwide, Leket Israel's sole focus is rescuing healthy, surplus food and delivering it to those in need through partner nonprofit organizations.

The Vision

An Israel where all surplus, nutritious food is rescued and directed to those who need it.

The Mission

To lead the safe, effective and efficient collection and distribution of surplus nutritious food in Israel, to those who need it.

Discussion Points:

- Have a chanich/a read this out loud
- Why do you think Israel's national food bank was chosen to be named with the term "leket" specifically?
- Is it significant that the term/concept of leket comes from the Torah? Does that send a message? If so, what is that message?
- What does the fact that only 5 countries have passed a bill of this nature tell you about Israel and its priorities?

Mitzvah #3: Shichicha

Scenario/Trigger:

- Tell the chanichim to imagine that they lost an object that they really care about
- Go around and ask chanichim to give personal examples of objects that are valuable to them to make the content more relatable/interactive
- Ask the chanichim how they would feel and react in such a situation
- They will presumably give answers such as "upset," "frustrated," "sad"
- Then to imagine that even if you didn't get the object back, someone else got it and is benefiting from it. How would this make them feel?

Ask the chanichim:

- Would this fact change the way you react to the situation? Why or why not?
- Would you be able to justify your loss by saying it happened for a good reason?
- Should we try to have this type of reaction (as opposed to the first) all of the time when we lose something, regardless of the outcome? If so, why?

Torah Source:

When you reap the harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, do not turn back to get it; it shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow—in order that Hashem your God may bless you in all your undertakings.

דברים כ"ד:י"ט
כִּי תִקְצֹר קְצִירְךָ בְשָׂדֶךָ וְשָׁכַחְתָּ עֹמֵר בְּשָׂדֶךָ לֹא תָשׁוּב
לְקַחְתּוֹ לְגֵר לִיתּוֹם וְלְאַלְמָנָה יְהִי לְמַעַן יְבָרְכֶךָ יְקוּקֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ
בְּכָל מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֶיךָ

- Explain that in the case of shichicha, you are the farmer and the crops forgotten in the field are the lost valuable objects
- Even though the farmer loses some of his crops, which is unfortunate as an isolated situation, you must see it in the bigger picture that someone who really needed was able to gain from it

Overall Discussion Points/Bringing it all Together:

- “More than what the rich man does for the poor man, is what the poor man does for the rich man” (Midrash Rabba: Rut: 5:9) – why do you think chazal said this?
- What is the common theme/message among these mitzvot?

Potential points to bring up:

- The very purpose of creation is the reason why giving is so important. Hashem is the ultimate giver, and man is supposed to emulate God’s actions in this world.
- By giving up these crops, land-owners are acknowledging that nothing truly belongs to them in this world and are recognizing owning crops as an opportunity from Hashem to give to those who need it
- Hashem created the world with people of different kinds, such as rich and poor, to allow people the opportunity to use their strengths, resources, and situations for the better.
- The obligation to perform these mitzvot are imbedded into the act itself of living in Eretz Yisrael, meaning if you live in Israel, you must do them. This shows how important of a value giving tzedakah is to the Jewish people (can tie back to the article and how even in Israel today this fact shows through).

Part 2: Types of Tzedakah

Activity:

- Split the chanichim into two groups
- Present each group with the cut-up pieces of paper of the different levels of tzedakah, out of order
- Tell them to put the papers in order from worst to best forms of giving tzedakah
- When they are done, have the groups present their order and why they chose to do it that way
- After both groups present, show them the list of Rambam’s levels of tzedakah that he compiled based off of the Talmud

Discussion Points:

- Why is this the order supported by the Talmud/Rambam? I.e., what constitutes good forms of giving and less good forms of giving and why? *don’t need to rehash if this was already discussed in depth during the activity
- Is there such a thing as bad giving? If so, would it be better to give nothing at all or give in a bad way?
- How do you think the mitzvot we covered in this peulah (peah, leket, and shichicha) could fit into this list?

Potential points to bring up:

- The field-owner must not involve himself at all in giving crops. He must completely remove himself from the picture and leave it for the poor to take themselves.
- Can contrast these mitzvot to giving tzedakah directly wherein the giver may feel an inevitable sense of pride for being the giver and seeing those he is giving to
- These mitzvot provide a constant source of stability to poor people because there is no timeline or set amount restricting them.

Materials

Rambam's 8 levels of Tzedakah (in order from worst to best):

Giving and making it obvious that you don't want to and making the person receiving it feel bad or embarrassed.

Giving happily but giving too little.

Giving happily and giving enough but only after being asked.

Giving before being asked.

Giving when you do not know who you're giving to, but the person receiving knows that its you.

Giving when you know who you're giving to, but the person receiving does not know that it's you.

Giving when neither the donor nor the recipient is aware of the other's identity.

Giving money, a loan, your time or whatever else it takes to help someone become self-reliant (so that they can take care of themselves)

Peulah #2: Working the Land - Practical Zionism
Written by James Williams, Director of Administration

Background: People create ideas and ideas create movement. In the Torah we learn about the many different Mitzvot that come with our entry to the Land of Israel, the Mitzvaot HaTluyot BaArtez including such things as Aliyah LeRegel, Bikurim, Shmitta and more. These mitzvot were only practiced by the small community in Eretz Yisrael during our time in Galut. Things now have changed. Why?

The Zionist movement was built up of many different thinkers with one central and unifying idea - that of a Jewish homeland. They all had differing opinions on how the homeland should look, how it should be achieved and the role Judaism & Jewish law should have in it.

Goal: To understand the meaning of Practical Zionism, working and developing the land.

Part 1. Practical Zionism & Physical Labor

A quick definition of Practical Zionism: A brand of Zionism emphasizing the practical means of attaining the Zionist goals such as settling the land, aliyah, building the state and developing infrastructure.

After Herzl's demise the political fortunes of Zionism made little progress, the progress that was made was in the practical sphere. For the first quarter of the 20th century great energies were made to build up the land and to establish strong Jewish communities in Israel (Palestine). The idea of a Hebrew University was born, the Jewish National Fund painfully redeemed acres of land with pennies from masses across the world. A Palestine office was established in Jaffa to organize Jewish settlement on the land. The second Aliyah brought with it many Jews to reinforce the fragile Jewish community in Palestine.

Life was lived in a general atmosphere of hardship. The immigrants lacked money and medical resources and often were short of food. The new society was marked by a deep sense of moral preoccupation. The settler tormented themselves with endless debates about the meaning of their lives and the shape of the nation they were struggling to build. Rigorous ideals of equality were pursued in the socialised communities which they founded.

These Chalutzim (Pioneers) were driven by a fierce and constant sense of mission. They had a little training for their pursuits and, for the most part, could only learn from experiment and failure. They were seeking an inner rebuilding of their souls, a total reconstruction of the national will. They knew how to unite ideas with action until translate freedom into creative growth.

The life of these pioneers was very different to the lives of the theorists and writers of Zionism. Practice Zionists were living the Zionist dream and turning it into a reality. The question must be asked did religion fit into this?

Discussion:

- What Mitzvot need to be taking into account as they settled the land?
 - Shmitta
 - Bikurim
 - Trumot & Massrot
 - Aliyah LeRegel
- Do these suffering Pioneers need to consider these things?

Games/Peula Ideas:

- Split the Chanachim into two groups and set them the following challenge;
- both teams must get from 'Place A' - Galut to 'Place B' - Israel without touching the floor of the room.
- The only way they can do this is to acquire pieces of land through doing certain physical tasks such as juggling, doing cartwheels etc.
- Whichever team does the task better get a tract of land which is a stepping stone to Israel.
- Whichever team gets to place be Israel first wins!

Part 2. Working the Land

So why is working the land so important?

1. Buying land was essentially buying homes for Jewish people. The Jewish people realized the significance of these purchases when they were able to fully to live in Israel in times of persecution.
2. When you're work the land you become part of it. A.D Gordon believed physical labor made a person a full human being. He claimed that when you work the land you change yourself and become attached to the land. You create an unbreakable bond between you and Israel.
3. Working on the land allowed all the different Jews in Israel to build a community through their work together.

Games/Peula Ideas:

Game #1- Play a game that involves the use of land, football, dodgeball etc. Once you have had fun playing the game, encourage that kind of seem to think about the most crucial physical aspect of the game needed in order to play the game. A bowl can't be replaced with around toy and goal posts can be replaced by a couple of sweaters. Ultimately, the Chanichim should realize that the space in which they were playing was the most crucial aspect of the game.

Game #2- Play Get Off My Land - a simple game where all but two chanchim have a chair (represents land) they stand on the chair, the two other chanchim play basically cat and mouse but the mouse can become safe by telling a landowner to 'Get off my land'

- In 1901, at the fifth Zionist Congress that JNF was entrusted with the responsibility of punched him purchasing and maintaining the land of Israel, through buying trees and establishing water systems. A distinctive sign of partnership between the JNF and the Jewish people with the blue box campaign which was set up in 1902 as well as the JNF's first fundraising devices to buy back and cultivate the land in Palestine, Jews all over the world were united in a single idea establishment of a Jewish state.

Game #3: Make a puzzle of the map of Israel. Mark on the map the early communities and infrastructures of Pre State Jews in the land.

- Discuss the different communities: Kibbutz, Kibbutz Dati, Moshavot, Urban centers etc and the relationship they had with Mitzvaot HaTluyot BaArtez.

Peula #3: Tu BiShvat - Happy Birthday Trees!
Written James Williams, Director of Administration

Trees, Trees, Trees, Trees
How wonderful they sound when there's a little breeze
How green they look in the summer sun
Crunch Crunch Crunch in the autumn...
Oh What fun!!! (Judith Moher)

Goal: To provide the chanichim with a deeper understanding of the importance of Tu BiShvat.

Tochen:

1. JNF-KKL - A modern version of Tu BiShvat
2. Tu BiShvat in the Sources
3. The Importance of Trees

1. JNF-KKL - A modern version of Tu BiShvat

Tu BiShvat is often seen today as a modern festival, often thought of as being the creation of the JNF (Jewish National Fund). The JNF-KKL was actually created in 1904 by Prof. Otto Warburg to raise the funds necessary to enable the Zionist movement to purchase land in Eretz Israel. At the time Eretz Israel was under Ottoman Rule and as such to claim stake to the land the planting of trees, specifically Olive trees due to Ottoman land laws, was needed. The JNF-KKL lead the way in redeeming land in this way. In Shvat of 1904 the JNF-KKL declared that Tu BiShvat be an Arbor day (a day of planting and caring for trees) for the Jewish schools across the country. Is that why we celebrate Tu BiShvat? Is it only 115 years old? We must also ask why in Shvat of all months; it seems to be the middle of winter!

Actually Tu BiShvat is the perfect time for the planting of young saplings and the blossoming of existing trees. As the cold days in the land of Israel start to warm toward the spring we start to see across the country the miracles of Hashem's natural world taking place. The pleasant sight of trees regaining a fresh new breath of life again after the long cold winter. The flowers of early blossoms taking their place on the empty branches with the smell of spring in the air. As we look out across the land of Israel we are reminded not to take life for granted as the world develops once again into new levels of beauty.

Since 1904 the JNF-KKL has planted over 240 million trees across the country. Originally these trees were Olive trees with the purpose of land reclamation. Once the land had been reclaimed, purchased and later after the Establishment of the State of Israel the JNF-KKL started planting vast forests across the country of varying tree types which help ensure Israel's environment and ecology remain safe and sound.

The JNF-KKL today have been instrumental in bringing new meaning to the day of Tu BiShvat; even though it was 16th Century Kabbalists of Tzfat who created the Seder Tu Bishvat and since then a small number of people have continued the tradition of this Seder. However the JNF-KKL brought new life to this day, making it a day to focus on the environment around us, the importance of regeneration of our forests, taking school children to plant trees and more.



Games/Peula Ideas:

1. Skits - Have the chanachim make a TV advert for Planting Trees on Tu BiShvat
2. Tree Memory - Match pairs of different native trees from Eretz Israel
3. Sing traditional Tu BiShvat songs:

HaShekedia Porachat

Eretz Chittah

Shoreshim, Geza, Anafim V'Alyim / Yesh Prachim, Yesh Perot (song to the tune of Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes)

A link to the JNF-KKL Tu BiShvat Song book

<http://www.greenwin.kkl.org.il/files/presentationsandmaterials/shiron-tu-bishvat/texts-and-chords.pdf>

Yet again we must ask where did we get the idea of this Arbor day from? Did the JNF-KKL just invent it in 1904?

2. Tu BiShvat in the Sources

The most significant source for Tu BiShvat can be found in the first Mishna of Rosh HaShana:

Discussion:

1. Learn together the source below:
2. Discuss with the Chanachim the significance and meaning of each of the New Years
3. When do we conclude the New Year for Trees is?

אַרְבַּעָה רָאשֵׁי שָׁנִים הֵם. בְּאֶחָד בְּנִיסָן רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְמַלְכִים וְלְרִגְלִים. בְּאֶחָד בְּאֵלוּל רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְמַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֵמָה. רַבֵּי אֶלְעָזָר וְרַבֵּי שְׁמַעוֹן אוֹמְרִים, בְּאֶחָד בְּתִשְׁרֵי. בְּאֶחָד בְּתִשְׁרֵי רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְשָׁנִים וְלְשִׁמְטֵין וְלִיִּזְבוּלוֹת, לְנִטְיָעָה וְלִירְקוֹת. בְּאֶחָד בְּשֻׁבָט, רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְאֵילָן, כְּדַבְּרֵי בֵּית שְׁמַאי. בֵּית הֵלֵל אוֹמְרִים, בְּחֻמְשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ:

The four new years are: On the first of Nisan, the new year for the kings and for the festivals; On the first of Elul, the new year for the tithing of animals; Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Shimon say, on the first of Tishrei. On the first of Tishrei, the new year for years, for the Sabbatical years and for the Jubilee years and for the planting and for the vegetables. On the first of Shevat, the new year for the trees according to the words of the House of Shammai; The House of Hillel says, on the fifteenth thereof.

This Mishna informs us that every Jewish year is made up of 4 Rosh HaShanot and Tu BiShvat is one of them. The 15th of Shvat was chosen as the New Year for trees as it marks the ripening of the the fruit for the purpose of Trumot and Maasarot at the time time of the Beit HaMikdash. The 15th of Shvat was chosen as the date which was to act as a boundary between the last year of fruit produce and the new year. Any fruit grown after this date is considered part of the new season.

Just as Hashem surveys and judges mankind during the month of Tishrei also during Shvat Hashem surveys the coming year and makes a decision concerning the wellbeing of the trees and the fruits they will produce. As such it is a time of prayer and judgement. Additionally at this time of the year the sap inside the tree rises within the trunk allowing the trunk to grow and develop further. This in turn leads to the growth and appearance of the first blossoms on its branches which takes place in a few months around Nissan. This will in turn mark the start of spring in Eretz Israel; the almond tree is the first to blossom and when that time comes we once again head outside to the trees and recite the bracha:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם, שלא חיסר בעולמו דבר, וברא בו בריות טובות ואילנות טובים ליהנות בהם בני אדם
Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the universe, for nothing is lacking in His universe, and He created in it good creatures and good trees, to cause mankind pleasure with them.

Games/Peula Ideas:

1. Tu BiShvat Treasure hunt - Seven clues that relate to the Shivat HaMinim with fruit as the prize (instead of candy - parents will love you!)
2. Blind Fruit tasting

3. The Importance of Trees

First of all, what is important about the concept of a Tree? In the Tanach we have a huge amount of imagery revolving around the tree. Take for example the act that possibly had the most long lasting effect on the future of mankind - the sin of Adam & Chava in Gan Eden. This sin did not include murdering someone or something else of that calibre, but rather eating a fruit from a tree.

What is so significant about trees? The significance lies in their structure. Trees take their nutrients from the ground, they spread their roots in order to gain as much nutrients as possible. They stand up straight and grow upwards towards the heavens. Similarly, man is compared to a tree "כי האדם הוא השדה". Man is, in a similar fashion expected to draw his nutrients and all his input from down here, life on earth, and is expected to grow upwards both physically and spiritually, towards heaven. Just like a tree requires water in order to grow, so too man requires water in order to survive. As long as the roots are strong, solid and healthy then man will grow upwards in all spheres of life.

The Torah is also compared to a tree, “עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה”.

Again the metaphor is clear. The Torah, like a tree has very firm roots. Its foundations are steadfast, and yet its branches are many and far reaching. It, again, like a tree grows only upwards towards heaven.

Trees are not significant, only symbolically. They are also important resources. They provide us with food such as fruit, nuts and olive oil, timber for furniture, paper from the wood pulp and rubber which is derived from the sap of certain trees. We must also not forget that they provide a habitat and a source of food for other animals and birds. We can benefit from the wood by burning it to enjoy its warmth, or we can use it to build shelter from climate.

It is a well known fact that the foliage of a tree absorbs carbon dioxide, which we breathe out, and through photosynthesis forms oxygen which is essential to sustaining life. Without the millions of trees on earth life could not continue to exist, for every creature and human would suffocate. Of course, trees enhance the countryside with their beauty and they protect the land by preventing soil erosion.

That is the significance of trees, but there is a far more ideological reason for celebrating Tu BiShvat. We celebrate Tu BiShvat to demonstrate a deep attachment to our Land. Planting trees safeguards the future for us; Tu BiShvat represents Jewish continuity. Rav Kook used to say that during the month of Shvat “The desire to plant trees arises from the desire to benefit the future generations.” This seems to link us nicely back to where we started with the JNF-KKL.

The concept he is describing is similar to that described in the Gemara Taanit (23a)

יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא חזייה להווא גברא דהוה נטע חרובא אמר ליה האי עד כמה שנין טעין אמר ליה עד שבעין שנין אמר ליה פשיטא לך דחייית שבעין שנין אמר ליה האי [גברא] עלמא בחרובא אשכחתייה כי היכי דשתלי לי אבהתי שתלי נמי לבראי
One day, he was walking along the road when he saw a certain man planting a carob tree. Honi said to him: This tree, after how many years will it bear fruit? The man said to him: It will not produce fruit until seventy years have passed. Honi said to him: Is it obvious to you that you will live seventy years, that you expect to benefit from this tree? He said to him: That man himself found a world full of carob trees. Just as my ancestors planted for me, I too am planting for my descendants.

This is an amazing thing. It is one of the few mitzvot that are done with a total lack of selfishness, since you personally are not going to directly gain anything from it.

There was a beautiful custom amongst some in ancient Israel that when a child was born a tree was planted in their honor, a cypress tree for a girl and a cedar for a boy. They would care for the tree as they were growing up and the branches would be used as the poles for their chuppa when they got married.

Games/Peula Ideas:

1. Skit - Act out the story of Honi (above)
2. Story - Read the Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein