## "Treevial Pursuit: A Tu B'Shevat Game" (PAGES 13–15)

LESSON PLAN BY INA MILLER LERMAN

**As students play this board game, they will become familiar with *shivat haminim*, the seven types of grains and fruits native to the land of Israel. They also will be introduced to the symbolic meaning of these grains and fruits in Jewish tradition. This lesson helps you expand upon the information presented in the game, especially appropriate as a class activity around the time of Tu B'Shevat (Shabbat, January 18, 2003).**

### CONCEPTS AND OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify the *shivat haminim* and one *pasuk*, Biblical verse, associated with each.
- Students will learn the appropriate blessings for *shivat haminim*.

### MOTIVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Split your students into groups of four to play the board game. You will need to supply pawns for each player, one die, and one Tanakh for each group. Help the students keep track of the game by giving each group a scorecard available online at www.babaganewz.com. As an alternative, students may use M&Ms to keep track of the game. Review the rules before your students play.

Here are some options for making the game more challenging for your students:

a. Require students to read the *pasuk* from the Tanakh in Hebrew and in English.

b. Tape a small piece of paper over the answers. Instead of allowing students to use the answer key as a crutch, you serve as the judge to make certain that students identify the correct blessing and pronounce the Hebrew words correctly. If students have difficulty, you can provide clues "at a cost" (for example, the first clue requires you to return to the start; the second clue means you miss your next turn).

c. Assign a different point value for each task in the game and determine the winner of the game based on how many points are accrued. For example:

Reciting the berakhah—3 points
Reading the verse in Hebrew—2 points
Reading the verse in English—1 point
Free pass—0 points
Crossing the finish line first—additional 2 points

d. Provide real food for your students as they play the game. As each student lands on one of the photo spaces and completes his or her task, the student could recite the appropriate blessing and sample that food.

**NOTE**

**You may not be able to find fresh pomegranates in the winter, but you should be able to provide wheat crackers, cooked barley, grapes or grape juice, dried figs, pitted olives, and dried dates.**

e. Encourage students to consider the symbolic meaning of the foods. One of the "tasks" is a free pass. Instead, of a "free pass" require a student to read a midrashic explanation of the food. These sources follow below and a printable source sheet is available on the teachers' section of www.babaganewz.com. Place each of these additional sources on an index card and create a set of cards for each group playing the game.

**NOTE**

**Tu B'Shevat falls on Shabbat this year. This game can easily be adapted for use in junior congregation or at home for a family activity.**

2. Once students complete the game, ask each student to write in response to one of the following prompts:

**If you could be one of the seven species, which one would you be? Explain.** (This question is asked on the board game, but not everyone will have the opportunity to answer it or to answer it in a thoughtful manner.)

**Why do you think trees need a New Year?** (Encourage students to write their answer in the style of a midrash: talking trees,animals,conversations between God and people.)

**Write a poem that refers to the symbolic meaning of several of shivat haminim.**

### FOLLOW-UP AND ENRICHMENT

1. Even if you are unable to provide tastes of all seven species, try to bring some special fruits to class in honor of Tu B'Shevat. Because this holiday forces us to think not only about trees, but also about Israel, bring other tasty treats from Israel.

2. Involve your students in creating a Tu B'Shevat Seder. The game makes a great way to introduce this project. Consider what "standard" parts of a seder you want to include. (What symbolic foods will be on your seder plate? Write "Four Questions" for this seder meal. What songs will be included? What verses from the Torah should be studied and how? What types of centerpieces can adorn the tables?)

3. Visit www.babaganewz.com/teachers for more ideas about how to teach Tu B'Shevat in your class.

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### JEWISH TEXTS

**WHEAT — חִטָּה —*Symbol of knowledge***

***Bereishit Rabbah 15:8***

*What was the type of tree from which Adam and Eve ate? Rabbi Meir says it was wheat. When a person has no knowledge, we say that person has never eaten wheat bread in his or her whole life.*

**BARLEY — שְׂעוֹרָה —*Symbol of renewal/beginnings***

***Berakhot 57a***

*When one sees barley in a dream, it is a sign that his or her sins have been removed, for it is written, "Your sin has left and your sin shall be atoned for" (Isaiah 6:7).*

**GRAPEVINE — גֶּפֶן —*Symbol of prosperity of Israel***

***Shemot Rabbah 44***

*Why is Israel compared to a grapevine? When you want to improve its fruit, you dig it up and replant it elsewhere and it improves. So when God wanted to make Israel known in the world, what did God do? God uprooted them from Egypt and brought them to the wilderness where they flourished. They received the Torah and became known in the world.*

**FIG — תְּאֵנָה —*A symbol of the Torah***

***Eruvin 54a***

*Why does the Bible say, "One who tends a fig tree will enjoy its fruit...?"* (Proverbs *27:18*) *How are words of Torah like a fig tree: Whenever you search a fig tree, you can find figs ready to eat. So also with words of Torah; whenever you are engaged in studying them, you will find morsels of wisdom.*

**POMEGRANATE — רִמּוֹן —*Symbol of beauty***

***Shir HaShirim Rabbah 6:11***

*Children are the crown of the Torah, adorning it just as silver* rimonim *(pomegranates) adorn the top of the Torah scroll. These are the schoolchildren who sit and study Torah, row by row, like pomegranate seeds.*

**OLIVE — זַיִת —*Symbol of hope***

***Menaḥot 53b***

*"God called your name a leafy olive tree"* (Jeremiah *11:16). Rabbi Joshua ben Levi taught: Why is Israel said to be like the olive tree? To tell you that even as the leaves of an olive tree fall neither during the summer season nor during the rainy season, so too Israel will never cease to be, neither in this world nor in the world to come.*

**DATES — תְּמָרִים —*Symbol of the* tzadik *(the righteous person)***

***Bemidbar Rabbah 3:1***

*A righteous person will flourish like a date palm. No part of the date palm is wasted: Its dates are eaten; its young branches are used for ritual blessing [of the* lulav *on Sukkot]; its fronds cover the Sukkah; its fibers are used to make ropes; its leaves are used for sieves; its planed trunks are used for roof beams. So too, there are none worthless in Israel: Some are versed in the Bible; others know* Mishnah*; some are masters of* aggadah *[storytelling]; others do good deeds; still others promote social equity.*