LESSON PLAN

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LESSON AT A GLANCE

The *shivat haminim* (the seven species of agricultural products with which the land of Israel is blessed) often serve as the focal point—or centerpiece—of the celebration of Tu B'Shevat. Many Jewish texts present the *shivat haminim* as metaphors for understanding human qualities. Students will study texts about the *shivat haminim* and consider which one they are most like and why. They will then create *shivat haminim* centerpieces to adorn the school's Tu B'Shevat Seder or celebration.

OBJECTIVES

- **Students will learn about the *shivat haminim* and the symbolism of each one.**
- **Students will identify how they personally relate to one of the *shivat haminim* and its meaning.**
- **Students will create centerpieces for Tu B'Shevat using the texts, images, and metaphors they studied about the *shivat haminim*.**

VOCABULARY

חִטָּה	wheat
שְׂעוֹרָה	barley
גֶּפֶן	grapevine
תְּאֵנָה	fig
רִמּוֹן	pomegranate
זַיִת	olive
תָּמָר	date

Shivat Haminim (The Seven Species)

MATERIALS

Items in red are available to print at babaganewz.com/teachers:

For the first part: pictures of the *shivat haminim*, texts for each of the *shivat haminim*, discussion questions for the texts

For the craft: terra cotta flower pots, floral foam chunks, bamboo skewers or wooden floral stakes, banner template printed on cardstock, the *shivat haminim* in Hebrew, paint pens or paint and brushes, markers, glue, old magazines, decoupage

LESSON PLAN

Mount pictures of the *shivat haminim* onto seven large pieces of paper and hang them around the classroom.

Begin class by asking students if they can identify the seven pictures around the room. Ask:

What do all these plants/foods have in common?

Introduce the following text to the class:

DEVARIM 8:7–8

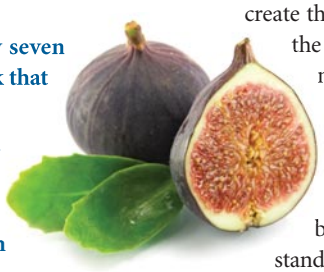
For God your God will bring you to a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, springing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and grape vines and fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive trees and date honey.

דברים ח:ז-ח

כִּי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ מְבִיאֲךָ אֶל-אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה אֶרֶץ נַחֲלֵי מָיִם עֲיָנֹת וּתְהֹמֹת יֹצְאִים בַּבִּקְעָה וּבָהָר: אֶרֶץ חִטָּה וּשְׂעֹרָה וְגֶפֶן וּתְאֵנָה וְרִמּוֹן אֶרֶץ-זֵית שֶׁמֶן וּדְבָשׁ.

To what do these verses refer?

Why do you think there are specifically seven growing species mentioned? Do you think that there is any symbolism to that number?



Why do you think that it was important for *Bnei Yisrael* (the People of Israel) traveling in the wilderness to hear this promise? How do you think hearing this description of Israel affected them?

How do the *shivat haminim* provide for many of a nation's basic needs? [grains and fruit for bread, wine for drink, and olive oil for light]

How, traditionally, do we symbolically represent the *shivat haminim* every week in our own homes? [challah—wheat; wine/juice—grapes; candlelighting—olive oil]

Why do you think we use these symbols every Shabbat? How do these items help to reinforce the message from the verses we just studied?

Expand the discussion and ask students to consider the following questions. This can be done either as a group discussion or as a writing exercise.

Have you ever tasted any of these items or foods made with them?

What are your favorite foods that are made with these items?

What words would you use to describe each of the species?

Which of the *shivat haminim* do you think you are most like? Why?

Divide students into seven groups. Give each group a text related to one of the *shivat haminim*. Explain that the texts compare each item to a certain human quality. Each group should read the text aloud and answer the following questions to help them identify the comparison that is presented.

What can we learn about this food item from the text?

What can we learn about ourselves from the text?

Do you agree with the comparison presented in the text? Why or why not?

Each group should then share the metaphor from the text with the whole class. After hearing the metaphors, ask the students the following questions.

Did you change your mind about which of the *shivat haminim* you are most like? Why or why not?

Based on the texts, why are you most like that item?

Working in their original seven groups, students will now create a symbolic representations of their assigned species that can serve as centerpieces to display on Tu B'Shevat. To create the centerpieces, provide each group with the materials. Instruct students to write the name of their species in Hebrew and English on one side of the banner and to write the metaphorical text on the other side of the second banner. Groups should then sandwich the skewer in between the banner to make a flag that can stand in the floral foam inserted at the bottom of the flower pot. Groups can decorate their flower pot with pictures of the species by drawing them or using decoupage to affix pictures taken from magazines.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Prepare a Seven Species Salad (link to recipe available at babaganewz.com/teachers) for Tu B'Shevat.

Create edible flowers for the holiday (instructions available at babaganewz.com/teachers).

Design an agricultural map of Israel. Have students research the areas in Israel in which the various *shivat haminim* grow best and designate those areas on a map of Israel using appropriate symbols for each of the species.