



**BetterTogether™**  
in a box

# Tu BiShvat Resource

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# Teen Program

The teen program is designed to run ~45-60 minutes (depending on options selected), either in-person, hybrid, or synchronously but remotely via Zoom or other virtual platform.

## Lesson Framing

We have so much to learn from this holiday observance which has been relegated to “minor holiday” status in most Jewish households and communities. In our text encounter, we first learn where in our traditional texts we are introduced to this New Year of the Trees. For some, this may be the first time they learn that Rosh haShanah isn’t the only Jewish New Year (and may require a quick sub-lesson/orientation on the Hebrew Lunar Calendar and a correction in the misunderstanding that Tishrei is the first month of our calendar). Here are some resources that may be helpful if refreshing this concept or teaching it:

[My Jewish Learning Resource Page](#)

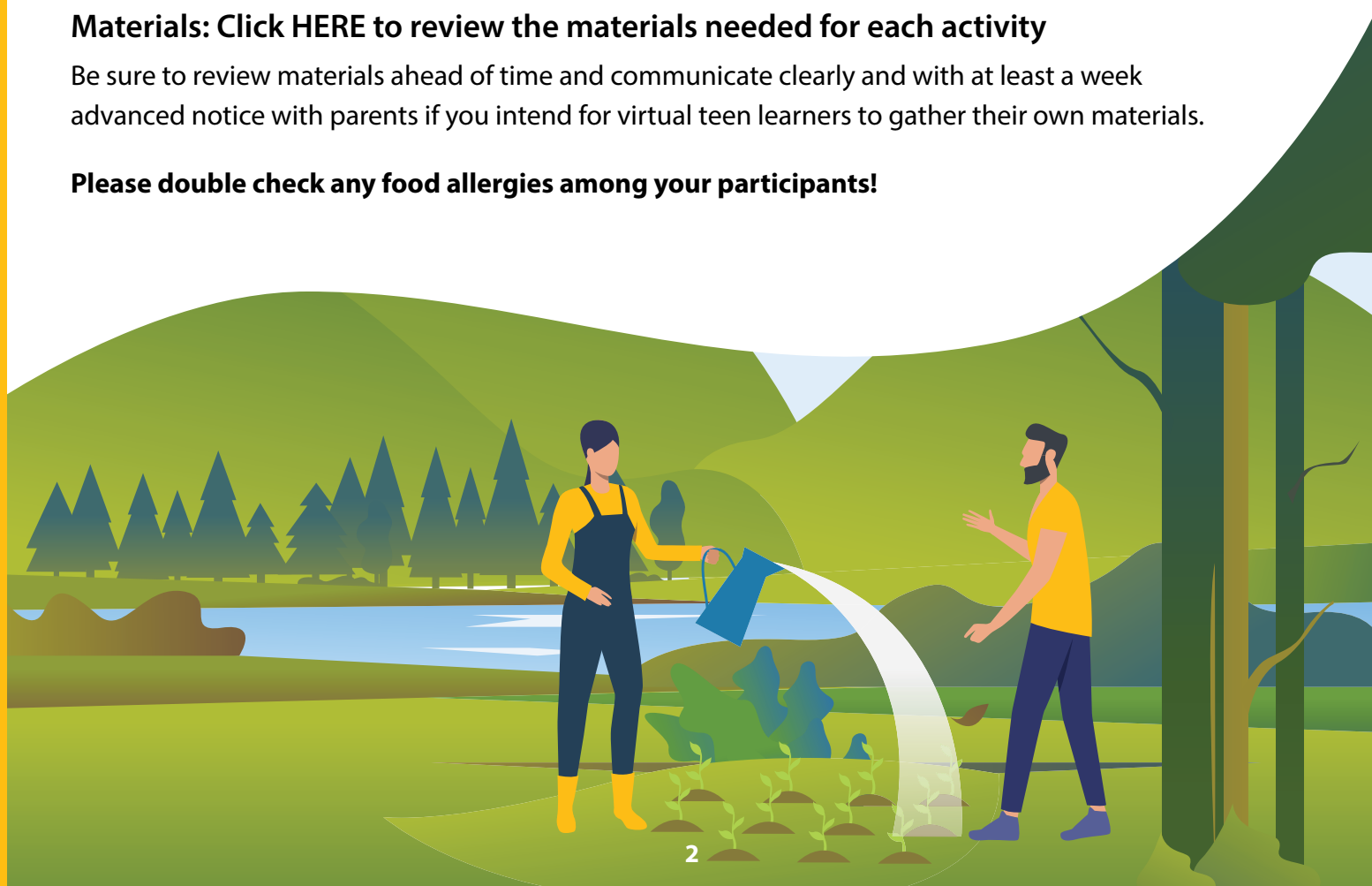
[JewishGPS Lesson Plan](#)

Then we frame the rest of the text discussion around two concepts that are incredibly relevant to the lives of our teens (and our seniors): environmentalism/conservation/stewardship and thinking ahead to the future of others.

## Materials: Click [HERE](#) to review the materials needed for each activity

Be sure to review materials ahead of time and communicate clearly and with at least a week advanced notice with parents if you intend for virtual teen learners to gather their own materials.

**Please double check any food allergies among your participants!**

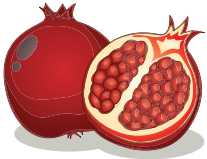


# ACTIVITY 1

[CLICK HERE FOR MATERIALS](#)

Set Induction (15 minutes)

We celebrate Tu BiShvat by eating the fruits from the land of Israel - mainly the seven species:



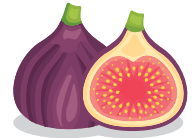
Pomegranates



Olives



Dates



Figs



Grapes



Wheat



Barley

...as well as learning about how to protect the Earth. Tu BiShvat has become the unofficial “Earth Day” of Israel where ecological advancements are discussed and celebrated and there is a tradition to plant trees in Israel for Tu BiShvat. More about the Seven Species [here](#) and [here](#).

It is also customary to eat new fruits that you have not tasted before (or have not tasted yet this year) and to say the Shehecheyanu blessing. Tu BiShvat has also become a symbolic date for restoring the Jewish connection to the land of Israel.

- 1 | If in person, each teen takes a small plate of 3-5 different pieces of the seven species (encourage them to choose at least one they have never had before).
- 2 | Place signs around the room with the name of all the seven species.
- 3 | The teens choose one of the signs to place themselves under (with their plates) [if on-line create breakout rooms named for the seven species] and they can choose one to enter.
- 4 | In their groups:
  - a. Share something on their plate they have never tried before and what they predict it might taste like. Have them then taste it and describe as creatively as they can what it tastes like to them.
  - b. Using their phones or laptops, have them research a little about the food sign they are under, how it grows, where it grows, what needs to be done to the soil/other conditions, to make it grow healthy, how much time it takes to grow from seed to a healthy and harvestable fruit tree, etc. (During their research they can eat their fruit sampler.)

- 5 | Bring everyone back together and have each group share out highlights from what they learned.
- 6 | Discuss as a group:
  - a. When you buy fruit at the store or eat it at home, do you ever consider what was done (the entire timeline) to get that fruit from seed to your mouth?
  - b. Which food among those researched, has the longest timeline from seed to eating?
  - c. What Jewish values or concepts might the teens predict could be used to frame the appreciation for what it takes to get to enjoy fruit? (they may mention God and creation, protecting the trees/land, general environmentalism, etc.)
- 7 | Share with the teens that today we will be looking at the Jewish holiday of Tu BiShvat through three lenses:
  - a. New Moon Holiday
  - b. Stewardship and Environmentalism
  - c. Planting for the Future

## ACTIVITY 2

[CLICK HERE FOR MATERIALS](#)

**Text Encounter (15 minutes)**

### OPTION a

#### **Divide and Conquer**

- 1 | Explain that the traditional way to engage in text study is to have one person read it out loud and have another rephrase it into their own words. Together they discuss the intention and the meaning of the texts. Try and determine what value or lesson we are supposed to take from the text.
- 2 | Divide the group into three sub-groups, one for each of the text categories (can be done in person or in break-out rooms on video platforms).
- 3 | Have each group go through the traditional method of text study outlined above and then tackle the discussion questions at the end of each section.
- 4 | Task each group with the role of teaching the big ideas of the texts to the other groups (save 6 minutes for this, 2 minutes per group).






## OPTION b

### Voting for Impact

#### In-Person

1 | Print each text on a giant poster and hang them randomly on the wall around the room.

2 | Give each teen three stickers (dots or stars): green, yellow, and red.

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|  The text that most speaks to them, they like the best |  The text that they think is most important lesson of Tu BiShvat |  The text they think more people in our world need to learn, understand and heed |
|---|---|---|

3 | Tell the teens to walk around and read each text and then go back and place their three stickers.

4 | Encourage them to not influence each other's choices.




#### Virtual

1 | You will be using Jamboard. You need to **MAKE A COPY** of the Jamboard **here** and ensure that all users with the link have editing rights.

2 | Share the link to your learners via chat and/or email.

3 | Share your screen so they can see your master one and give them a set amount of time to journey through the eight texts and place their votes. (They will have control over the copy they open and you will be able to see as they vote on your shared screen copy.) Advise them to be careful that they don't delete each other's votes.

4 | You will instruct the teens to add colored circles for the following:

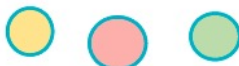
- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|  The text that most speaks to them, they like the best |  The text that they think is most important lesson of Tu BiShvat |  The text they think more people in our world need to learn, understand and heed |
|---|---|---|

For a video on how to add colored circles, click **here**.

#### Mishnah Rosh HaShanah 1:1

They are four days in the year that serve as the New Year, each for a different purpose: On the first of Nisan is the New Year for kings; it is from this date that the years of a king's rule are counted. And the first of Nisan is also the New Year for the order of the Festivals, as it determines which is considered the first Festival of the year and which the last. On the first of Elul is the New Year for animal tithes; all the animals born prior to that date belong to the previous tithe year and are tithed as a single unit, whereas those born after that date belong to the next tithe year. Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Shimon say: The New Year for animal tithes is on the first of Tishrei. On the first of Tishrei is the New Year for counting years, as will be explained in the Gemara; for calculating Sabbatical Years and Jubilee Years, i.e., from the first of Tishrei there is a biblical prohibition to work the land during these years; for planting, for determining the years of orla, the three-year period from when a tree has been planted during which time its fruit is forbidden; and for tithing vegetables, as vegetables picked prior to that date cannot be tithed together with vegetables picked after that date. On the first of Shevat is the New Year for the tree; the fruit of a tree that was formed prior to that date belong to the previous tithe year and cannot be tithed together with fruit that was formed after that date; this ruling is in accordance with the statement of Beit Shammai. But Beit Hillel say: The New Year for trees is on the fifteenth of Shevat.

ארבעה ראשי שנים הם. באחד בניסן ראש השנה למלכים ולרגלים. באחד באדר ראש השנה למעשר בהמה. רבי אלעזר ורבי שמעון אומרים, באחד בתשרי. באחד בתשרי ראש השנה לשנים ולשמיטין וליובלות. לנטיעה ולירקות. באחד בשבט, ראש השנה לאילן, כדברי בית שמאי. בית הלל אומרים, בחמשה עשר בו



5 | Bring the group back together to discuss: (if you are hybrid, be sure to combine the calculations on the Jamboard with the posters in the room)

☐ Which texts had the most **green** stickers?  
Why do they think that is?

☐ Which texts had the most **yellow** stickers?  
Why do they think that is?

☐ Which texts had the most **red** stickers?  
Why do they think that is?

☐ Look at the texts with the fewest number of stickers - ask a teen who placed one on that text to explain why they did so (repeat 2-3 times with different unpopular texts).

6 | Task the group with organizing the texts into the three categories:



Tu BiShvat



Stewardship and  
Environmentalism



Planting for the Future

7 | Discuss:

- Overall, what is our takeaway about our role in helping the planet?
- Did any of the texts surprise you?
- Did any text need more explanation for you? Or leave you with another question or curiosity?
- Hold up fingers 1-4. 1 being not at all and 4 being very much: How surprised are you that Judaism has so much to say about the human role in the planet and taking care of Creation?
- Ask one teen who held up a 1 to explain; ask one teen who held up a 4 to explain.

## ACTIVITY 3

MATERIALS • LETTER I • LETTER II

### OPTIONAL: Preparing Buddy Boxes (15 minutes)

*If the teens do not assemble these during their meeting, then staff or volunteers will need to assemble.*

- Set up long tables with supplies so that teens can go down the assembly line.
- Each teen (or teen groups) will prepare a Buddy Box for their senior partners.
- Buddy Boxes will include:
  - A copy of the Text Encounter
  - A bag of dried mixed fruit
  - A bottle of Kosher grape juice
  - Small pop-up recycle bin
  - Expression of Text supplies (Mad Libs, video message e-cards, or planting supplies)

# Intergenerational Activities

Because each community and senior center may have different COVID-19 related restrictions at different times, a range of options has been provided which meet different needs. For each option we have drafted a template cover letter that program facilitators should include in their package to individual seniors (Letter Version I) or to a senior site coordinator (Letter Version II).

## ACTIVITY 4

MATERIALS • LETTER I • LETTER II

### OPTION a

### Non-Electronic Asynchronous Activity Expression of Text - Tu BiShvat "Mad Libs"

In this asynchronous activity, the teens and their senior buddies exchange written (or typed) cards with each other. We have provided a "**Mad Libs**" style outline where the participants can easily fill in the prompts OR write their own individualized messages to each other reflecting the theme of the lesson and referring to lessons from the Text Encounter.

When sending the cards from the teens, the package will include a blank Tu BiShvat Mad Libs and a Text Encounter sheet for the seniors. If you are sending cards directly to the seniors individually, be sure to include a pre-stamped and addressed return envelope as well as the small cover note (**version 4a-I**) included in the resources document. If you are sending this to a program director, you should be sure to include a larger return envelope and cover note (**version 4a-II**) along with your materials.

#### TEEN PREP WORK

- 1 | Give each teen three pieces of cardstock, access to markers and stickers, and label sets with the text quotes on them.
- 2 | Ask each teen to take out one of their cardstock sheets and fold it in half.
- 3 | The words "Celebrate Tu BiShvat" should appear on the outside.
- 4 | On the inside cover of the card, they should place the label(s) of chosen quote(s).
- 5 | On the inside the teens should write a note to their senior partners. They can follow the Mad Libs pattern if they would like, but they should rewrite the text - the Mad Libs form itself should be given to the senior. (If a teen has manual dexterity issues, consider allowing them to dictate it to a volunteer writer, OR to type it and print it.)
- 6 | If they wish, they can decorate the card with markers and/or stickers.
- 7 | The second piece of cardstock (again with Celebrate Tu BiShvat on the outside) is for the Senior to use and fill out for their teen partner. On the inside of this one, leave the space blank.
- 8 | (The third sheet of cardstock is a back-up if a teen makes a mistake.)

## ACTION STEPS

### Educators

will provide the Mad Libs and Text Study materials to the teens, with the teen programming material.

*Approximate time: 5 minutes*

### Teen Educator

will facilitate the mailing of the cards to the seniors either 1:1 OR through a Senior Site Coordinator.

*Approximate time: 5-7 minutes*

### Students

will include a blank Tu BiShvat Mad Libs and a copy of the Tu BiShvat Text Encounter sheet in the cards they provide to the seniors.

*Approximate time: 7-10 minutes*

### Seniors

will read the students' cards and the Tu BiShvat text sheet and fill out the Mad Libs. They will return this in the provided card.

*Approximate time: 20 minutes*

### If processed through a Senior Site Coordinator

return cards are collected and mailed back to the Teen Coordinator. *Approx. time: 8-12 min.*

# ACTIVITY 4

MATERIALS • LETTER I • LETTER II

## OPTION b

### Electronic Asynchronous Activity Expression of Text - Video Messages

In this asynchronous, but technology-based activity, students record messages that will be shared with their seniors on their e-card (if you are using e-cards) or via an online website.

### TEEN PREP WORK

- 1 | Teen should review the text encounter and choose at least two texts that they want to share with their Senior Partner.
- 2 | The teen should write (hand written or on computer) a brief script in which they:
  - a. Introduce themselves.
  - b. Read the text and its source and explain what that text means to them.
  - c. Ask their senior partner at least one of the related Buddy Questions (or write their own) as it relates to the text or curiosity?
  - d. Share how their learning about Tu BiShvat has impacted the way they think about Jewish values and the natural world around them.
  - e. Consider including anything from their teen activities around Tu BiShvat that they really enjoyed (explain what the teens experienced and why they particularly liked it).
- 3 | Rehearse and then record their script for their Senior Partner. Remember to smile and speak clearly. (**Here** is a short instructional video on how to create the best video for seniors.)



## ACTION STEPS

### Teens

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complete the activity outlined in the Teen Expression of Text Video Message program outlined above.

*Approximate time: 10-20 minutes*

### Seniors

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will watch the teen videos and reply either by video or emailing their teen buddies.

*Approximate time: 25-40 minutes*

### Teen Site Coordinator

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will then facilitate the mailing of the e-cards to the senior buddies. If the e-cards will be sent directly to the seniors individually, be sure to include a pre-stamped and addressed return envelope as well as the small cover note (**version 4b-I**) included in the resources document. If you are sending this to a program director, you should be sure to include a larger return envelope and cover note (**version 4b-II**) along with your materials.

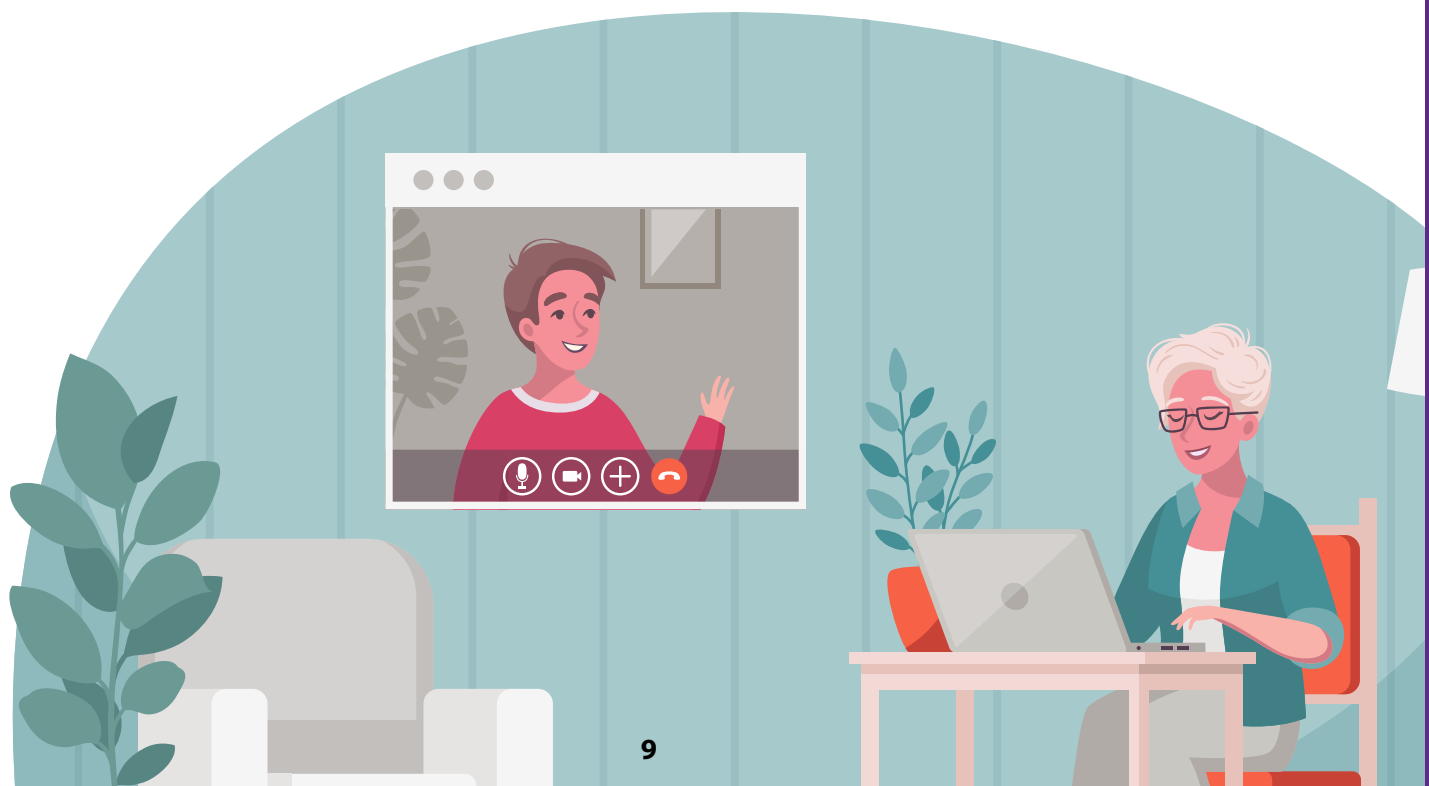
*Approximate time: 10-15 minutes*

### Senior Site Coordinator

---

may facilitate a group mailing of e-cards from their participants.

*Approximate time: 8-12 minutes*



This session assumes that the senior partners have reviewed the Text Encounter prior to the synchronous meeting OR that the Teen/Senior Activity C will be conducted in conjunction with this expression activity.

This activity will be completed synchronously with their buddies. One will be completed by the teens to keep and one for the senior partners. *Please communicate clearly and with at least a week advanced notice with parents if you intend for virtual teen learners to gather their own materials.*

In session, please explain to the teens the steps of this project they will complete with their buddies. Demonstrate for them the process with your sample. This will familiarize them with the project and allow them to easily facilitate it with their senior partners.

## TEEN PREP WORK

- 1 | Each person takes a colored pot and at least two Sharpies.
- 2 | On one side of the pot the person should express the ways they will be stewards to the land and God's creations. On the other side, they express the ways that they will plant for the future (for themselves, their descendants, their community).

*Note: This can be done with words or drawings. If the participant is not comfortable with the use of markers due to motor skills, the education leader should encourage them to print images at home that will be glued (or modge podged) onto the pot or type their expressions and print them to then be affixed to the pot.*

- 3 | Show participants that using the soil, shovels and the succulent, they will plant their new green friend and add some water with the watering can.
- 4 | Explain that the shovels and watering cans are for the senior buddies to keep.
- 5 | Answer any questions the teens may have about facilitating this activity with their buddies.
- 6 | If you are in person and they will be meeting with their buddies at various times (not as a group) have the teens make themselves a kit to take with them which includes:
  - a. Succulent plant
  - b. 1 quart soil pouches - one per buddy
  - c. Plastic pot
  - d. Sharpie 2-pack sets for senior buddies

## ACTION STEPS

If you are sending the materials directly to the seniors individually, include the cover note (**version 4c-I**) included in the resources document. If you are sending this to a program director, you should be sure to include the cover note (**version 4c-II**) along with your materials.

### Educators

---

order the Buddy Box supplies and supervise teen (or volunteer) assembly, or they assemble the Buddy Boxes themselves. Finally, they deliver the Buddy Boxes to the senior buddies or to Senior Site Coordinators.

*Approximate time: 3 hours*

### Seniors

---

will review the Text Encounters included.

*Approximate time: 30 minutes*

### Those Meeting Individually

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Teens and seniors who are meeting individually will communicate to set a synchronous time.

*Approximate time: 5-10 minutes*

### Teens and Seniors

---

- Teens will guide seniors through the labeling of their pot: On one side of the pot the seniors should express the ways they will be stewards to the land and God's creations. On the other side, they express the ways that they have planted and/or will plant for the future (for themselves, their descendants, their community).
- Seniors will share what they have written on their pots.
- Teens will share what they wrote on their pots (if in person, they can bring their plants to the meeting, if virtual, they can hold them up and share them).
- Teens will guide the seniors through the planting of the succulent.
- The group will conclude by sharing general thoughts about what they have learned and experienced in learning about Tu Bishvat.

*Approximate time: 30-50 minutes*



# ACTIVITY 5

## Synchronous Learning Teen-Guided Text Study (Virtual or In-Person)

This session includes an interactive text study led by the teens and then a guided activity with the senior partners. Leading a text study might be a new experience for the teens, especially virtually! Here are some tips to help the session flow naturally.

### ACTION STEPS

#### Educators

---

will also facilitate the arrangement of the online video meetings between seniors and students either 1:1 or through a Senior Site Coordinator. *Approximate time: 10-30 minutes*

#### Teen Coordinator / Teens

---

will need to work with the teens to set this up for success. *Approximate time : 25-35 minutes*

- **Prepare!** Each teen participant should be prepared to read a few of the texts. They should practice reading them slowly and clearly. They should have one or two short comments to share after reading the text—reflecting on the meaning or the connections they have to the text. They should also prepare to ask a few guiding questions and/or the Buddy Questions about their text.
- **During the session,** the teens should be reminded to speak clearly and slowly. They should be encouraged to engage the seniors by having the teens ask their prepared questions and then letting the conversation flow naturally. Note: conversation can be a bit stunted on Zoom, but usually participants will warm up as you go. Remind the teens to allow time for seniors to unmute to speak.
- The teens should **conclude** their synchronous learning by inviting general reflection and connections to the text study. Be sure to ask the seniors about ways they have “planted for the future” (either literally or metaphorically), and ways that attention to environmentalism has changed in their lifetimes. Have a teen prepared to genuinely thank everyone for participating.

#### When Coming Together Virtually or In-Person

---

a teen member will introduce the session by making sure everyone has a copy of the text study—ideally physically. Have a teen (preselected!) explain that the teens studied these texts in advance as part of a lesson exploring the holiday of Tu BiShvat. Lay out who will be participating in different roles (that the teens will read the texts and then they have some prepared questions). *Approximate time: 30-40 minutes*

# Materials and Resources

Important notes for program materials:

- **Please double check any food allergies among your participants!**
- Please communicate clearly and with at least a week advanced notice with parents if you intend for virtual teen learners to gather their own materials.

## ACTIVITY 1

### Set Induction

1. Fruit selection portioned into tasters:
  - pomegranate seeds
  - olives, dates
  - grapes
  - figs (fresh, dried, or Fig Newton cookies)
  - wheat (Wheat Thins or other wheat crackers or snacks)
  - barley (puffed barley cereal)
2. Signs with the 7 species pictured and labeled; blue tape to hang the signs

#### *OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL SET INDUCTION ACTIVITY:*

1. White/chalk board, large butcher paper and markers and/or virtual chat box or white board

## ACTIVITY 2

### Text Encounter

#### OPTION a

##### Divide and Conquer

1. Copies of the **Text Encounters**

#### OPTION b

##### Voting for Impact

1. Signs of each text
2. Stickers: green, yellow and red stars or dots

## ACTIVITY 3

### Buddy Boxes

(approximately \$13- \$25 per buddy box)

1. A copy of the Text Encounter
2. A bag of dried mixed fruit.  
Example: **Mound City** (\$7.49)
3. A small bottle of Kosher Grape Juice.  
Example: **Oh Nuts** (\$1.89)
4. Small pop-up recycle bin. Examples:  
**Walmart** (\$5) or **Uline** (\$2.75)
5. Expression of Text Supplies (Mad Libs, video message e-card, or planting supplies below):
  - Medium sized colored pots - one per person. Examples: **Amazon** and **Walmart** (\$.60-\$1.20 each)
  - Succulent plants - one per person. Example: **Etsy** (\$2 each)
  - Small shovels - one per person if virtual, sharing if together. Examples: **Amazon** and **Etsy** (\$1-1.70 each)
  - Watering cans - one per person if virtual, sharing if together. Example: **Walmart** (\$3)
  - Sharpie Markers - two per person. Examples: **Walmart** 72-pack and Sams 24-pack (\$1-\$1.60 for two)



# ACTIVITY 4

## Expression of Text for Partnership

### OPTION a

#### Mad Libs Letter

1. Three pieces of 8.5x11" cardstock per person with the "Celebrate Tu'Bishvat" copied on the top of one side (so when it is folded in half, that is on the outside top)
2. Stickers with trees and leaves and fruits
3. Markers
4. Mad Libs **outline** (can be projected or printed and given out/shared between multiple teens)
5. Sheets of 5163 labels that have the texts from "Stewardship" and "Plant for the Future" on them (multiple sets for teens to share around the room)

### OPTION b

#### Video Messages

1. E-cards

### OPTION c

*For teens who are working in-person with their senior buddies, they will share the watering can and shovels in the Buddy Boxes during the activity.*

#### Planting for the Future

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Medium sized colored pots - one per person. Examples: <b>Amazon</b> and <b>Walmart</b> (\$.60-\$1.20 each)              | 4. Watering cans - one per person if virtual, sharing if together. Example: <b>Walmart</b> (\$3)            |
| 2. Succulent plants - one per person. Example: <b>Etsy</b> (\$2 each)  | 5. Sharpie Markers - two per person. Examples: <b>Walmart</b> 72-pack and Sams 24-pack (\$1-\$1.60 for two) |
| 3. Small shovels - one per person if virtual, sharing if together. Examples: <b>Amazon</b> and <b>Etsy</b> (\$1-1.70 each) |   |

# Tu BiShvat Text Encounter

Texts and translation of the traditional Jewish texts are from **Sefaria.org**.

*Please note that all texts appear in their original form. We invite those whose comfort is to encounter text in a gender-neutral reading to adapt for their group's comfort.*

The following Tu BiShvat Text Encounter is broken into three subsections:

**1** Tu BiShvat,  
New Moon Holiday

**2** Stewardship, Environmentalism  
and Conservation

**3** Planting for  
the Future

## **1** New Moon

*(Educators note: if your students are unfamiliar with who Hillel and Shammai are, briefly explain.)*

### Mishnah Rosh HaShanah 1:1

There are four days in the year that serve as the New Year, each for a different purpose ... **On the first of Shevat is the New Year for the tree; the fruit of a tree that was formed prior to that date belong to the previous tithe year and cannot be tithed together with fruit that was formed after that date; this ruling is in accordance with the statement of Beit Shammai. But Beit Hillel say: The New Year for trees is on the fifteenth of Shevat.**

אַרְבָּעָה רָאשֵׁי שָׁנִים הֵם...  
בְּאַחַד בְּשֶׁבֶט, רִאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה  
לְאֵילָן, כְּדִבְרֵי בֵּית שַׁמַּאי.  
בֵּית הֵלֵל אוֹמְרִים, בַּחֲמִשָּׁה  
עָשָׂר בּוֹ

### Discussion

1. Were you aware there were multiple New Years within the Jewish calendar?
2. Why do you think the text indicates that a fruit tree “formed prior to that date” cannot be tithed in the new year?
3. What is symbolic or important about Trees vs. other natural occurrences in creation?
4. What might this text from Deuteronomy 20:19, “A human is like a tree of the field” mean and how might it relate to this Mishnah?

### Buddy Questions (or write your own)

1. What are ways you have celebrated Tu BiShvat?
2. Have you ever planted a tree with your own hands? Or a garden? What was the location and situation around you doing that? Do you know if it's still living?
3. We learned in Deuteronomy 20:19, it says “A human is like a tree of the field.” How have you been a “tree in the field” of your community?



## Genesis 2:15

The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, **to till it and tend it.**

## Deuteronomy 20:19-20

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.**

## Sefer HaChinukh 529

To **not destroy fruit trees**... The root of this commandment is well-known - it is to teach our souls to love the "good" and benefit and cling to it. Through this, good clings to us and we will be distanced from all bad and destructive things. And this is the way of the pious and people of [proper] action - they love peace and rejoice in goodliness of men/women and bring them close to Torah, and they do not destroy even a grain of mustard in the world. And they are **distressed by all loss and destruction that they see; and if they can prevent it, they will prevent any destruction with all their strength.**

## בראשית ב':ט"ו

וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם  
וַיִּנְחֵהוּ בְּגֶן־עֵדֶן לְעֲבֹדָהּ וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ:

## דברים כ':י"ט-כ'

כִּי־תִצּוֹר אֶל־עִיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֶם  
עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְשָׁהּ לֹא־תִשְׁחִית אֶת־עֵצָהּ  
לְנֹדֶחַ עָלֶיהָ גִּרְזֹן כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכַל וְאֵתוֹ  
לֹא תִכְרֹת

## ספר החינוך תקכ"ט

שלא להשחית אילני מאכל... שרש  
המצוה ידוע, שהוא כדי ללמד נפשנו  
לאהב הטוב והתועלת ולהדבק בו,  
ומתוך כך תדבק בנו הטובה, ונרחיק  
מכל דבר רע ומכל דבר השחתה, וזהו  
דרך החסידים ואנשי מעשה אוהבים  
שלום ושמחים בטוב הבריות ומקרבים  
אותן לתורה, ולא יאבדו אפילו גרגיר  
של חרדל בעולם, ויצר עליהם בכל  
אבדון והשחתה שיראו, ואם יוכלו  
להציל יצילו כל דבר מהשחית בכל  
כחם.

### Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

When the Blessed Holy One created the first human, He took him and led him round all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to him: "Look at My works, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are! And all that I have created, it was for you that I created it. **Pay attention that you do not corrupt and destroy My world: if you corrupt it, there is no one to repair it after you.**

### קוהלת רבה ז':י"ג

בְּשַׁעַה שֶׁבָּרָא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת  
אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן, נָטְלוֹ וְהִחֲזִירוֹ עַל כָּל  
אֵילָנֵי גֶן עֵדֶן, וְאָמַר לוֹ, רְאֵה מַעֲשֵׂי  
כְּמָה נָאִים וּמִשְׁבַּחֵי הֵן, וְכָל מָה  
שֶׁבָּרָאתִי בְּשִׁבְלֶךְ בְּרָאתִי, תֵּן דַּעְתְּךָ  
שֶׁלֹא תִקְלַקֵּל וְתִחַרֵּיב אֶת עוֹלָמִי,  
שְׂאֵם קִלְקֵלֶת אֵין מִי שְׂיִתְקֵן אַחֲרָיֶךָ

### Discussion

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*Note: The Jewish value that refers to not destroying creation is called Bal Taschit.*

1. As a collection of texts, what are we to learn about the HUMAN role in CREATION?
2. Look closer at Sefer HaChinukh 529. How many of you have seen clear-cutting (the taking out of a large area of trees in one location) in your communities in order for developers to build housing or businesses? What impacts have you SEEN in your communities as a result? What impacts might this text indicate that we should be aware of? (Note that the prohibition in the Torah is regarding the destruction of fruit trees during war.)
3. What words or phrases woven throughout these texts (look at the green) indicate that it is YOUR responsibility to help prevent destruction of the environment?

### Buddy Questions (or write your own)

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1. How have you been a partner in creation in this world?
2. Where is your favorite place to be in nature?
3. What is the worst case of destruction of nature you have witnessed in your life? What was that situation and how has it impacted you?
4. What is something you have done to help protect or steward things in nature in this world?

### 3 Planting for the Future

#### Taanit 23a:15

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.**

#### Leviticus 19:23-25

When you enter the land and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten. In the fourth year all its fruit shall be set aside for jubilation before the LORD; and **only in the fifth year may you use its fruit**—that its yield to you may be increased: I the LORD am your God.

#### Discussion

1. What does it mean to “plant for the future” both in a literal sense and in a metaphorical sense?
2. What does patience have to do with the environment, creation, and Tu BiShvat?
3. Why not eat from a treat in the first four years? What did your research at the beginning of today’s activity teach us about the timelines of fruit trees?

#### Buddy Questions (or write your own)

1. In thinking about younger people in your family, in what ways have you planted for their future? (literally or metaphorically?)
2. Can you share about a time in your life when you started something, initiated it, but had to wait a long long time to see it come to fruition? What was it like waiting? Did you have doubts it would happen?
3. What is your favorite fruit to eat? When was the last time you had it? Do you have a recipe you can share that uses that ingredient?

#### תענית כ"ג א:ט"ו

יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא חזייה  
לההוא גברא דהוה נטע חרובא אמר  
ליה האי עד כמה שנין טעין אמר ליה  
עד שבעין שנין אמר ליה פשיטא לך  
דחיית שבעין שנין אמר ליה האי גברא  
עלמא בחרובא אשכחתייה כי היכי  
דשתלו לי אבהתי שתלי נמי לבראי

וכי־תבאו אל־הארץ ונטעתם כל־עץ מאכל  
וערלתם ערלתו את־פריו שלש שנים יהיה  
לכם ערלים לא יאכל:

ובשנה הרביעית יהיה כל־פריו קדש הלולים  
ליהוה: ובשנה החמישית תאכלו את־פריו  
להוסיף לכם תבואתו אני יהוה אלהיכם:

# Tu BiShvat Mad Libs

For seniors: Your buddy has shared with you about what they learned regarding the lessons for humanity as it pertains to Tu Bishvat. They would love to know about you! Complete this Mad Libs style response to let them know about you. When you are done filling this out, put it into the card and addressed envelope that it came with and mail it back to your buddy.

Hi, \_\_\_\_\_ ! It's great to hear from you!  
*your buddy's name*

This Tu BiShvat, I  
am reflecting on \_\_\_\_\_  
*something for which you are aware of as it relates to tending to fruit trees and/or enjoying fruit*

and for \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*something for which you are considering about your responsibility to the natural world around us*

To me, being a steward of Creation is \_\_\_\_\_  
*an adjective to describe the responsibility*

because \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*why?*

The quote which most speaks to me about stewardship/planting for our future is:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*your favorite quote*

because \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*why?*

One way I try to practice the idea of Bal Tashchit (בל תשחית)  
*not destroying* the world around me, is to: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*what do you do?*

Wishing you a happy, joy-filled, fruit-filled,  
and healthy Tu BiShvat celebration, \_\_\_\_\_  
*your name*

## ACTIVITY 3-I

### Buddy Box (if sending to the seniors individually)

Dear Senior,

Enclosed you will find Buddy Box materials prepared by your teen Better Together™ buddy. As a group we learned the enclosed set of texts related to the values and lessons related to the holiday of Tu BiShvat. Specifically, we learned about Stewardship/Environmentalism/Conservation and the idea of “Planting for the Future.”

We have enclosed the following components in your Buddy Box:

- A copy of the Text Encounter
- A bag of dried mixed fruit
- A small bottle of Kosher grape juice
- A pop-up recycle bin
- Expression of Text Supplies (Mad Libs, video message e-cards, or planting):

*Include one  
of these:*

- **If Mad Libs:** The teens selected a particular text to include on your card. You will also find a blank card and a “Mad Libs” style letter to reply. Your teen buddy would love to hear about your connection to the world around us, your commitment to helping preserve Creation, and ways you have “planted for the future” (literally or metaphorically). Please use the enclosed envelope to mail your response directly to **your buddy / to our center** and we will distribute them to the teens.
- **If e-card:** The teens have recorded themselves reflecting on their texts and their experience. Please **check your email / watch your e-card video** for your personal message. The teens would love to hear about your connection to the world around us, your commitment to helping preserve Creation, and ways you have “planted for the future” (literally or metaphorically). You can send your responses via video or email.
- **If planting supplies:** The teens look forward to facilitating a fun project on **date/time**, involving a new succulent plant for you. The supplies include:
  - Succulent plant
  - 1 quart soil pouches
  - Plastic pot
  - Watering can
  - Shovel
  - Sharpie markers

Sincerely,

Your Name, Title

Contact Information

## ACTIVITY 3-II

### Buddy Box (if sending to a program coordinator)

Dear Senior,

Enclosed you will find Buddy Box materials prepared by our teens for each of their Better Together™ buddies. As a group we learned the enclosed set of texts related to the values and lessons related to the holiday of Tu BiShvat. Specifically, we learned about Stewardship/Environmentalism/Conservation and the idea of “Planting for the Future.”

Each Buddy Box has enclosed the following components:

- A copy of the Text Encounter
- A bag of dried mixed fruit
- A small bottle of Kosher grape juice
- A pop-up recycle bin
- Expression of Text Supplies (Mad Libs, video message e-cards, or planting):

*Include one of these:*

- **If Mad Libs:** The teens selected a particular text to include on the card to their buddies. You will also find a blank card and a “Mad Libs” style letter to help the seniors reply. The teen buddies would love to hear about the seniors’ connection to the world around us, their commitment to helping preserve Creation, and ways they have “planted for the future” (literally or metaphorically). Please use the enclosed envelope to mail the responses directly to our center and we will distribute them to the teens.
- **If e-card:** The teens have recorded themselves reflecting on their texts and their experience. Please help the seniors **check their emails / watch their e-card** video for their personal message. The teens would love to hear back about the seniors’ connection to the world around us, their commitment to helping preserve Creation, and ways the seniors have “planted for the future” (literally or metaphorically). You can send the seniors’ responses via video or email.
- **If planting supplies:** The teens look forward to facilitating a fun project on **date/time**, involving a new succulent plant for each senior buddy. The supplies include:
  - Succulent plant
  - 1 quart soil pouches
  - Plastic pot
  - Watering can
  - Shovel
  - Sharpie markers

Sincerely,

Your Name, Title

Contact Information

# Cover Letters

*For all letters, highlighted text alerts you to multiple choices to select from.*

## ACTIVITY 4a-I

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### Mad Libs Letter (if sending to the seniors individually)

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Dear Senior,

Enclosed you will find a letter from your Better Together™ buddy. As a group we learned the enclosed set of texts related to the ideas of gratitude and recognizing the lessons and values surrounding the holiday of Tu BiShvat. The teens selected a particular text to include on your card. You will also find a blank card and a “Mad Libs” style letter to reply. Your teen buddy would love to hear about your connection to the world around us, your commitment to helping preserve Creation, and ways you have “planted for the future” (literally or metaphorically).

Please use the enclosed envelope to mail your response **directly to your buddy / to our center** and we will distribute them to the teens.

Sincerely,

Your Name, Title

Contact Information

## ACTIVITY 4a-II

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### Mad Libs Letter (if sending to a program coordinator)

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Dear Program Coordinator,

Enclosed you will find letters from the teen Better Together™ buddies. As a group we learned the enclosed set of texts related to the values and lessons related to the holiday of Tu BiShvat. Specifically, we learned about Stewardship/Environmentalism/Conservation and the ideal of “Planting for the Future.” The teens selected texts to include on their cards to their buddy.

For each senior, we have also included a blank card and a “Mad Libs” style letter to reply. The teens would love to hear about the seniors’ connection to the world around us, their commitment to helping preserve Creation, and the ways they have “planted for the future” (literally or metaphorically).

Please use the enclosed envelope to mail the responses to our center and we will distribute them to the teens.

Sincerely,

Your Name, Title

Contact Information

**ACTIVITY**  
**4b-I**

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**Video Messages** (if sending to the seniors individually)

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Dear Senior,

Enclosed you will find an e-card from your Better Together™ buddy. As a group we learned the enclosed set of texts related to the values and lessons related to the holiday of Tu BiShvat. Specifically, we learned about Stewardship/Environmentalism/Conservation and the ideal of "Planting for the Future." The teens selected particular texts to share in your card. Please check your watch your e-card video for a personalized video reflection from your teen about their experience.

You can reply by email or video - whichever is most convenient for you. Your teen buddy would love to hear about your connection to the world around us, your commitment to helping preserve Creation, and ways you have "planted for the future" (literally or metaphorically).

Sincerely,

Your Name, Title

Contact Information

**ACTIVITY**  
**4b-II**

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**Video Messages** (if sending to the seniors individually)

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Dear Program Coordinator,

Enclosed you will find e-cards from the teen Better Together™ buddies. As a group we learned the enclosed set of texts related to the values and lessons related to the holiday of Tu BiShvat. Specifically, we learned about Stewardship/Environmentalism/Conservation and the ideal of "Planting for the Future." The teens selected texts to include on their e-cards to their buddy. The teens recorded themselves reflecting on their texts and their experience. I have enclosed the e-cards / emailed you the videos to share with the seniors. If your program allows, you could also use the enclosed text sheets to facilitate a local discussion about the texts.

The teens would love to hear about the seniors' connection to the world around us, their commitment to helping preserve Creation, and ways they have "planted for the future" (literally or metaphorically). The seniors can send their responses via video or email.

Sincerely,

Your Name, Title

Contact Information



**ACTIVITY**  
**4c-I**

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**Planting for the Future — Virtual or In-Person**  
(if sending to the seniors individually)

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Dear Senior,

As a group we learned the enclosed set of texts related to the values and lessons related to the holiday of Tu BiShvat. Specifically, we learned about Stewardship/Environmentalism/Conservation and the ideal of “Planting for the Future.” We look forward to having you meet online with your teen on **day, time** in order to learn from them and with them regarding these texts.

During your discussion, the teens would love to hear about your connection to the world around us, your commitment to helping preserve Creation, and ways you have “planted for the future” (literally or metaphorically).

Sincerely,

Your Name, Title

Contact Information

**ACTIVITY**  
**4c-II**

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**Planting for the Future — Virtual or In-Person**  
(if sending to a program coordinator)

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Dear Program Coordinator,

As a group we learned the enclosed set of texts related to the values and lessons related to the holiday of Tu BiShvat. Specifically, we learned about Stewardship/Environmentalism/Conservation and the ideal of “Planting for the Future.”

The teens have prepared to facilitate a shared text study session on **day, time**. We are very excited to learn together at this time. During the discussion, the teens would love to hear about the seniors’ connection to the world around us, their commitment to helping preserve Creation, and ways they have “planted for the future” (literally or metaphorically).

Sincerely,

Your Name, Title

Contact Information