



Values Curriculum:

Caring for Seeds/Tu B'Shvat

OVERVIEW	This session explores the holiday of Tu B'Shvat, Jewish Earth Day. Using seeds and planting as the focal point, students learn about their role as caretakers of the earth.
OBJECTIVE	To take care of seeds as a way of practicing the Jewish value of Shomrei Adamah and to link that value to the Jewish holiday of Tu B'Shvat.
VALUE(S)	<i>Shomrei Adamah</i> (Caretakers of the Earth)
STORY	"A Prayer for the Earth: The Story of Naamah, Noah's Wife" by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
MATERIALS	Fruits, Seed Necklace & Seed Ball materials
AT HOME CHALLENGE	Students will take seed necklaces home to wear until they sprout and then plant them. Students will take home seed balls to cast into an open area.

Materials List

Activity One

- Spray bottle with water
- Mung beans
- String or yarn cut into 18 inch lengths
- Beads
- Mini ziplock plastic bags, 1.5" x 1.5" (pill bags can also work) with a hole punched into the top center
- White cardstock paper cut into 1" squares with a hole punched into the top center
- Paper towels cut into 1" squares
- Markers or crayons

Activity Two

- 1 quart of water
- Large plastic tub for mixing ingredients
- Paper plates
- Sharpie or markers to label the plates with the children's names
- Bag of potting soil
- Box of pottery clay mix (readily obtained from any local craft store)
- 1 bag of wildflower seeds, or native grasses

Gathering Activity

- A variety of fruits with different types of seeds: oranges, kiwi, strawberry, tomato, apple, avocado
- Knives, cutting boards, plates, paper towels
- Magnifying glasses to share
- Paper and pencils

Opening/Closing Circle

- Book: *A Prayer for the Earth: The Story of Naamah, Noah's Wife* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso
- Big pad of paper and markers
- At Home Challenge Sheet

Gathering Activity: Fruit Dissection & Seed Saving (15 Minutes)

Children will gather and study seeds from different fruits.

1. Gather children around a table with fruits and nuts laid out.
2. Have children (or a teacher or teaching assistant) cut some of the fruit so that the seeds are visible. Some seeds will be hard to extract as with a strawberry or banana.
3. Have each child collect a seed from each fruit. Some seeds will need to be shared as with the avocado.
4. Have children share the magnifying glasses to investigate their seeds more carefully. Children may also choose to draw one or more of their seeds.
5. Once each child has some seeds in front of them discuss what they see.
 - ◇ What do you notice?
 - ◇ Where did you find the seeds in the plant?

- ◇ Are they soft or hard? Are they big or small?
- ◇ Are there many or just one or a few?
- ◇ Are they easy or difficult to pull out of the fruit?

6. Offer kids a taste of the fruits they've dissected.

Opening Circle (10 Minutes)

Gather everyone into a circle and begin with a melody, a niggun or a greeting song such as Hineh Ma Tov.

Tell about today's theme:

- Today we are learning about Tu B'Shvat.
- What do we already know about Tu B'Shvat?
- Tu B'Shvat is: the birthday of the trees, a time to honor the earth, means the 15th day of the month of Shvat, often celebrated by eating special fruits and planting.

Introduce today's Hebrew word — Shomrei Adamah:

- Everyone, pat your hands on the earth 3 times and say "a-da-mah" (one pat with each syllable).
- Adamah means earth. It's firm enough to walk on and soft enough to plant in.
- Everyone bring your arms together in a great big hug (like you are taking care of yourself) and say "shom-rei."
- Shomrei means caretakers or people who take care of something.
- Now put the two together: Shomrei (hug yourself) Adamah (pat the earth 3 times).
- Together they mean caretakers of the earth. Every person can be a caretaker of the earth.

Story (20 Minutes)

Introduce the Story — A Prayer for the Earth: The Story of Naamah, Noah's Wife

- Set a plate of the seeds from the gathering activity into the center of the circle. Ask the children about their experiences with seeds.
- Have you ever planted a seed? How do you help it grow?
- Ask the children if they have heard of Noah's ark.
- The story we're going to read is about a woman named Naamah. She took care of the earth in a special way. She was Noah's wife. They built an ark together and Noah's job was to save animals from a huge flood that covered the planet. Naamah had her own special job on the ark. Let's find out what it was.

Read the Story. Ask some good Questions.

- **Check for Understanding**

- ◇ How was Naamah a caretaker of the Earth—how did she practice *Shomrei Adamah*?

- **Get Curious**

- ◇ What are kids wondering about the story?
- ◇ Encourage kids to wonder about WHY something happened in the story, WHAT might happen next, or HOW someone did something.
- ◇ Record these questions on the big pad of paper.
- ◇ These questions don't have to have answers – though kids are welcome to try and answer each other's questions.
- ◇ Have kids respond to each other's questions with "good question!" and a thumbs up

- **Give one more Question to Ponder**

- ◇ I'm wondering: What would have happened to the people, to the animals, and the planet if Naamah hadn't saved seeds?

10 Minute Break

Activity One: Seed Necklaces (20 Minutes)

Children will make necklaces for seeds that will grow with the help of their own body heat. They will practice taking care of the seed at home as it sprouts.

Introduce the Activity:

In our story, Naamah collected seeds from near and far, took care of them for a long time, and then planted them. Today, you will get to take care of a seed, too, by helping it grow with your own body heat!

When you see the seed start to sprout, you can transfer it into a pot with soil and put it outside in the sun. You will still need to care for it, giving it water when the earth is dry. Do you think you can be *Shomrei Adamah*, caretakers of the Earth, for a little seed?

1. Show the children the seeds they will help sprout.
2. Demonstrate the making of the seed necklace first – then have the children do it.



3. Take one of each:
 - ◇ Mini plastic bag with hole punched at top
 - ◇ 2 cut pieces of paper towel
 - ◇ Seed
 - ◇ String cut to length
 - ◇ Square of paper with hole punched at top
4. Use a spray bottle to wet the paper towel thoroughly.
5. Insert the seed and paper towel into the mini plastic bag and zip it closed.
6. Decorate the square of paper.
7. String the yarn through the holes in the paper and plastic bag, add beads, and tie the yarn together.
8. Instruct the children to wear the necklaces inside their shirts to keep the seed warm.

Activity Two: Seed Balls (20 Minutes)

Children will make balls of clay that contain seeds and potting soil inside to help re-plant open spaces in their community.

Introduce the activity:

In our story, Naamah knew that the earth would be empty and barren after the flood. Sometimes in our communities there are also pieces of land that have not been taken care of and have little life in them. One way to help these places is by tossing “seed balls” into them!

Seed balls are balls of clay with seeds hidden inside. They help the seeds stay protected from the wind, the hot sun, and birds that might eat the seeds before they can sprout. Eventually, the seeds will sprout safely in the clay and set roots down in the place you put them.

Once you make some seed balls, you can actually throw them into empty lots of land to help areas that humans haven't taken care of. But you have to wait at least 2 days for the seed balls to dry before you throw them!

Work together with the children on the first two steps:

1. Pour into the large mixing tub:
 - 2 parts soil
 - 5 parts clay mix



- 1 part water
2. Mix the ingredients thoroughly, so there are no lumps. All hands involved!
3. Pull out clumps 1" in diameter and hand one to each child.
4. Instruct the children to pick out 3 small pinches of seeds and to mix them into the clump so they are well hidden. Roll the clump into a ball
5. Put the clumps onto plates labeled with each child's name.
6. Have each child take home their plate and let their balls dry on it at home.

Closing Circle (10 Minutes)

Gather everyone into a circle.

Introduce Closing Game: Make that Seed Sprout! (5 min)

We're going to play a game where we work together to act out what a seed needs in order to sprout.

All of us will be *Shomrei Adamah* in the game. We are going to use our bodies to show all of the different caretakers of a seed. This game doesn't have speaking in it, but it can have sound effects and movement in it.

1. First, ask for a child to volunteer (or you may assign the role) to play the seed. The seed should roll up into a tight ball in the center of the circle.
2. Call the remaining children into the center of the circle where they will play different caretaker roles to help the seed sprout. The children may come up with their own elements, or you can assign them.
3. Narrate the process of sprouting—get dramatic! Maybe there's a storm, a drought, or a solar eclipse! Maybe there's a bird pecking on the ground trying to eat the seed!

Some roles you might suggest and movements that might go along with them:

- Seed (What kind of seed are you?)
- Earth or clay (surrounds the seed)
- Sun (shines)
- Water (falls)
- Person (holds the watering can)

Review the Hebrew Words of the Day:

- Have the children practice the Hebrew words with their bodies:
- *Shomrei* (a big hug to yourself) *Adamah* (pat the ground 3 times).
- Have the children say what *Shomrei Adamah* means (caretakers of the earth).

Pass out the At Home Challenge Sheet

Sing a goodbye song like *Shalom Chaverim* or *Oseh Shalom*.

At Home Challenge: Caring for Seeds

Today, in celebration of Tu B'Shvat, we learned how we can be *Shomrei Adamah*, caretakers of the earth. We focused on how precious seeds are and how we can take care of them and help them grow into plants that keep us and the planet healthy. Together we made a Seed Necklace and a Seed Ball.

Here are the next steps to take as a family with both of these projects as you practice being *Shomrei Adamah*:

1. Sprout the seed in the necklace. Remember to keep the seed moist, and to wear the necklace every day to keep it warm. Once the seed sprouts, you can plant it in a pot as a family.
2. Let the seed ball dry for at least 2 days; then toss it onto an empty lot or open space to promote native plant growth. You don't have to bury or plant the seed balls, simply toss them in a spot where you want them to grow. The next rainfall will help them sprout!