



BNEI AKIVA
OF THE US AND CANADA

CHOVERET CHINUCH

Chodesh Shvat

Noseh: צמיחה/Growth



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Chodesh Tov!

We're happy to introduce you to the Choveret Chinuch for Chodesh Shvat! This month we're focusing on the theme of צמיחה or Growth. Shvat is a month when we focus on nature and what it means to us. Tu Bishvat teaches us the importance of investing in the future, and how growth requires hard work. It isn't easy and we might not even see the fruit of our toil, like one who plants a tree might not even see it fully grown. The holiday of Tu Bishvat is also very important to the Zionist community. We'll see how planting trees in the Land of Israel helped the desert bloom and marked the Jew's return to their homeland.

It is important that you and your madrichim own these peulot as your own.

What we gave you is just the skeleton, if you do exactly what this page says- you will not run a successful snif! Read the peulot, make edits, and add your own stories or favorite games! Mix and match- these peulot have many parts, you can take parts of a peula and move them to another or create new ones. At the end of this choveret you can find extra stories and ideas to add as you like. Feel free to run ideas by any of us!

Bivrakat Chevrei Torah v'Avodah,

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Choveret Chinuch Tevet 5778

Peula #1 Taking Initiative

Written by Jen van Amerongen, Merakezet Chinuch with help from Talya Saban, HA

Goal: The kids should learn about the importance of zritzut (eagerness/enthusiasm) and taking initiative. To teach this idea we will use the example of growing trees in the Land of Israel and Choni HaMagel asking God for rain.

Game #1: I am Sitting on a Chair

- Make a circle of chairs, with one extra.
- One by one, people move down the circle into the empty seat and say a word of the sentence "I am sitting on a chair and calling on _."
- Whoever's name was called runs and sits in the empty chair (the one that was just vacated by the person who said "I am sitting on a chair..."). If you say the wrong thing or you don't get up to run to the chair immediately, you're out.

Game #2: "See, Run, Plant" Spin off of See, Run, Build

- Divide the kids up into 2 teams
- Each team gets split into 3 groups, the See-ers, the Runners and the Builders.
- Prepare a structure or design on the floor made up of weird materials (construction paper cut into shapes, cups, plates, forks, pipe cleaners, string). It would be nice to make some sort of tree design so that it is like the kids are "planting".
- The see-ers look at the structure and run to another station where the runners are waiting. They tell them what they saw (describe a part of it).
- The runners run to another room where the builders are waiting with the bag full of the same material that the 1st thing is made of.
- The runner has to describe to them how to build it. Since they can't describe it all at once they have to keep running back in forth, but the kids have to stick to their own job
- See-ers cannot run straight to the builders they have to go through the runners, etc. the 1st team to rebuild the object wins the race!

Discussion points:

- The idea of Zrizut is the eagerness and readiness to do a mitzvah whenever the opportunity strikes.
- Ask: What's something that you run to do? (watching TV, getting snack etc.) What's a mitzvah that you run to do?
- Why is zrizut important for our return to Israel? (If we don't do it, no one will!)
- We have to work hard for what we want!

Info about planting trees in Israel:

<http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/24629/tu-b%E2%80%99shevat%E2%80%94guide-for-the-perplexed>

In modern times, an alternative tradition has taken hold: planting trees. Back in 1890, to celebrate Tu B'Shevat, Rabbi Ze'ev Yavetz, one of the founders of the religious Zionist movement Mizrachi, took his students to plant saplings in Zikhron Yaakov, an agricultural settlement outside what would soon become Tel Aviv, the seaside city founded in 1909. As more immigrants flocked to the Promised Land, the custom took root, symbolizing the renewal of both the soil and the people. The tradition has since become routine for Israelis, **more than a million of whom plant trees each year on Tu B'Shevat.**

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tu-bishvat-ideas-beliefs/>

In modern times, Tu B'Shevat has become a symbol of both Zionist attachment to the land of Israel as well as an example of Jewish sensitivity to the environment. **Early Zionist settlers to Israel began planting new trees not only to restore the ecology of ancient Israel, but as a symbol of renewed growth of the Jewish people returning to their ancestral homeland.** While relatively few Jews continue to observe the kabbalistic Tu B'Shevat seder, **many American and European Jews observe Tu B'Shevat by contributing money to the Jewish National Fund, an organization devoted to reforesting Israel.**

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/zionism-and-tu-bishvat/>

Story of Choni HaMagel (Taanit 23b)

Script from GodCast- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRfV7XrGfBo>

Could be told as a story, but would also be very engaging as a skit involving the kids. You can assign kids to different parts, including sound effects. Bring props! Most importantly a stick for Choni.

The story of Choni teaches us that if we want something to happen we have to do everything in our ability to get it. Choni even spoke in a way that we would think as disrespectful, but in the story it was exactly what he needed to do. And this connects to Tu Bishvat, because he was asking for rain for the trees to grow.

Narrator: In the land of Israel, the winter season is the only time it rains. And that year, there was no rain.

Sound effects: dun dun dunnn

Farmer #1: I'm so thirsty, we haven't had water in weeks

Farmer #2: I'm so hungry, and my crops are dead.

Both Farmers Shout: What should we do???

Farmer #2: Let's ask Choni the Circle Maker for help!

Choni: What can I do for ya?

Farmer #1: There's no rain

Farmer #2: Our trees won't grow.

Choni: Stop kvetching. I know what to do. I'm going.... to pray.

Narrator: Choni went and drew a circle in the ground with a stick and stood in it

Choni: Hey God! These people really need the rain. Please, send us some!

Choni to the Farmers: How's it going?

Both Farmers: Nothing yet.

Choni to God: Hello God? These people really need the rain. We depend on it for everything. It waters the plants. It makes the trees grow. And the trees give us shelter, wood, nuts, and fruit. And, uh, the people aren't taking many showers lately.

Sound effects: Ewwwww!

Farmer #1: Show some respect, that's God you're talking to!

Farmer #2: He is going to get sooooo skewered.

Narrator: then all of a sudden

Sound effects: light rain sound, pitter patter with hands on the floor

Choni: Come on God! I'm not leaving this circle until it really rains!

Sound effects: thunderstorm sound snapping and hard clapping

Both Farmers: Whoa!

Choni: Nice job, God. You rock.

Farmer #1: Most people talk to God with respect.

Farmer #2: But it's like they're talking to their dentist. At least Honi and God talk like a child and his Father. Sometimes a child nags his father and his father fulfills his wish.

Choni to God: Okay, boss. Gotta go.

Orchot Tzdikim:

Chapter Fifteen: ON ZEAL - שער החמשה-עשר - שער הזריזות

הזריזות היא מידה גדולה לתורה ולמצוות, וגם לעניין תקנת העולם הזה. והיא מידת הצדיקים לעבודת הבורא יתברך. ואמרו רבותינו זיכרונם לברכה (פסחים ד א): **זריזין מקדימים למצוות.**

Zeal for the Torah and the commandments is a great quality, and so is zeal that aims to make a better world. And it is a quality of the righteous in the service of the Creator, may He be Blessed. Our Sages, of blessed memory, said : **"The zealous are early to perform their religious duties"** (Pesahim 4a).

Choveret Chinuch Tevet 5778

Peula #2 Patience and Looking to the Future

Written by Jen van Amerongen, Merakezet Chinuch

Goal: Have the chanichim understand that investing in the future takes patience and that we might not always see the results of our hard work. To illustrate this idea we will teach the story of Choni HaMagel, who we spoke about in a previous peulah. This idea connects to planting trees and Tu BiShvat.

Pickle Idea: A week before snif, *during the week* (pickling is assur on Shabbat). Have the kids pickle cucumbers in a mason jar. They will have to wait a week for the pickles to be ready and taste right.

<https://www.mensjournal.com/food-drink/how-to-make-easy-no-cook-cucumber-pickles-20150715/>

(This was included in an earlier Choveret) Optional opening: “The Marshmallow Test” tell the kids at the beginning of snif that they have a choice. They can either have a snack now or they can wait until the end of snif and get two snacks. At the end of snif you can give them the snacks and tell them that this was about sometimes you have to wait for good things!

Game #1: Pass the Banana (or orange)

- Have kids stand in a straight line (split boys and girls)
- Let's see how fast we can pass a banana up and back down the line. Here is the catch: You can't use your hands. You must hold the banana with your chin.
- Pass the banana, chin to chin, up and down the line. If someone drops the banana, you must start over.
- Place the banana beneath the chin of the child in front of the line.
- Show that child how to hold the banana between his or her chin and chest.
- Odds are that the banana will drop to the floor a few times during the game.
- Allow children to express frustration, but redirect unkind words.
- If children have an especially difficult time, modify the rules so kids can restart the game with the same partner who dropped the banana.

When kids have finished, gather them around you in a circle. Say: **It's easy to feel impatient when things don't go your way. Sometimes people do things that make it hard for you to get what you want. When we get impatient, we're tempted to say things that aren't nice. We can make others feel bad. But we can learn patience.**

Points for discussion:

- Was this game easy or difficult for you? Why?
- How did you feel when someone dropped the banana? Why?
- If you dropped the banana, how did you feel when you heard the group's reaction?

Game #2: Human Knot (Separate boys and girls)

- Stand the group in a circle.
- Have everyone put their right hand in the center of the circle with the thumb up.
- Then everyone should reach in with their left hand and grab someone else's right thumb.
- Make sure that right hands are attached to left hands and make sure that two people don't have both of each other's hands.
- Send a pulse around the group to make sure that everyone is connected (if not, exchange a few hands to connect everyone).
- Then try to unscramble the knot back into a circle.
- The knot should untangle unless you have an overhand knot (which cannot be undone, except by creative reconnecting).
- Twist: Give the group an amount of time to finish the task (ex: 45 seconds) and see if its easier under time pressure or when they take time to finish

Points for discussion:

- Was this game easy or difficult for you? Why?
- Do you think it makes sense to do the challenge more quickly? Or slowly?
- What are the benefits of taking it slower?

Story of Choni HaMagel and the Carob Tree (Taanit 23b)

Also adapted from Godcast's video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRfV7XrGfBo>

And <http://www.torahtots.com/jewishpress/20090123midrash.htm>

Could be told as a story, but would also be very engaging as a skit involving the kids. You can assign kids to different parts, including sound effects. Bring props!

Narrator: One day, the great sage Choni Hameagel pondered over the meaning of the sentence that appears in Tehillim 126, "שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת בְּשׁוּב ה' אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים," "A song of ascent, when Hashem returned the captives of Tzion, we were like dreamers." The idea is that once the exile (Galut) is over it will feel like it was just a 70 year long dream.

Choni: Why does the Hashem compare the galut/exile to a dream? Is it possible for a person to sleep for 70 years?

Narrator: Choni Hameagel looked for the meaning of the sentence but couldn't find it and got very upset. He prayed to Hashem to show him the meaning. One day he happened to be walking along the road and noticed an elderly farmer planting a carob tree. Choni wondered why the farmer planted this kind of tree.

Choni: Hey, What are you doing?

Farmer #1: I'm planting a carob tree.

Choni: Why bother? That's going to take forever.

Farmer #1: 70 years, actually.

Choni: Exactly. You won't even be around to eat it.

Farmer: Maybe I won't, but my grandparents planted carob trees for me. So I'm planting trees for the next generation to come.

Choni: Oooooookay.

Narrator: That could have been the end of the story. But it isn't. For then, as the rabbis tell it... Choni fell asleep for 70 years.

Choni goes to sleep

Farmer #2 steps on Choni while hes sleeping

Choni yelling at Farmer #2: Hey! (yawn) *stretches* Did you plant that tree?

Farmer #2: My grandparents did!

Choni: Is the son of Choni Hamagel still around?

Farmer #2: No, but I'm his grandson.

Choni looks a little freaked out

Farmer #2: You look a little wiped out. Here, snack on some carob.

Narrator: Choni learned his lesson and realized that even if we don't get to see the results of everything we do, it still impacts the future.

Wrap up discussion points:

Tu Bishvat, the holiday of the trees, teaches us a lot about patience and investing in a future that we might not even be able to benefit from. We have to recognize that even if we don't get to see the results, what we do will impact the future.

Choveret Chinuch Tevet 5778
Peula #3 Planting the Seeds of Bnei Akiva!
Written by Ariel Shields, Mazkir Artzi

Goal: To highlight those who planted the seeds of Bnei Akiva and helped it grow into the movement we have today

Game #1:

- Before Shabbat print off numbers 1-50 and cut them up into individual pieces and make sure you'll have a hula hoop available as well.
- Place these numbers in the hula hoop but do not let the chanichim see the placement of the numbers
- The goal of the game is for the chanichim to touch all the numbers in order without stepping inside the circle as fast as they can. Time the chanichim while they do it
- Once they finish the first round have them stand at the other side of the room and then give them a time goal that they are attempting to reach and give them another opportunity to complete the challenge.
- Keep doing this having them develop strategies until they beat their goal

Facilitate a conversation-

- What's hard about this race?
- Talk about the importance of persevering and continuing to strive to achieve your goals

Story of Yechiel Eliash and the Creation of Our Movement

Yechiel Aharon Eliash was born in the town of Cyzev. When he was 10 his mother passed away and he was forced to step up and take leadership and act as a parent to his younger siblings. When he was 13, Eliash went to learn in the local yeshiva, where his Religious-Zionist outlook was shaped. When Eliash turned 17 he decided to make Aliyah to Israel. He said that it was not enough to talk about the Land of Israel, it was also necessary to make the move to Israel.

In 1925, Eliash moved to Israel to attend Yeshivat Merkaz Harav Kook. He studied at the yeshiva while at the same time he continued his membership in Hapo'el Hamizrachi, where he had began working in Poland. He grew to love the Torah that he studied in Yeshiva however he

believed that Israel needed Jews who study Torah but that we should devote the rest of our energy to building up the land agriculturally.

After learning in Yeshiva for a few years, Eliash moved to an agricultural centre created by Hapoel Ha-Mizrachi, which was established in Petah Tikva in order to further live out his goal of living a life of Torah V'Avodah. Shortly after he arrived at the centre, Eliash realized that he wanted to be living in Jerusalem and moved back there.

In 1928, Eliash decided that the time had come to fulfill his lifelong dream of establishing a religious-zionist youth movement. "It was necessary to develop religious identities and install religious pride among the youth," Eliash said "I prepared a plan to establish a movement for the idea of 'Torah V'Avodah'" He proposed this idea to Mizrachi who immediately shut him down, saying that a youth movement would inspire the youth to rebel and that there was no place for rebellion. But Yechiel Eliash persevered and did not take no for an answer and stood for what he believed in and he planted the seeds to start a youth movement on his own because it's what he believed in.

Facilitate a conversation-

- What happened in the story?
- What was Yechiel Eliash's goal?
- What would have happened if Yechiel Eliash gave up after his first attempt?

Game #2: Name Game (Bang)

- Everyone stands in a circle and one madrich stands in the middle
- Start by having everyone introduce themselves (if everyone doesn't already know each other.
- The person in the middle will call out a person's name and when they do, that person must duck down as quick as possible and the people on their sides have to quickly turn to each other with their air guns and yell "BANG!"
- Whoever yells it second is out, or if the person whose name was called doesn't duck then they are out. Keep doing this until there is one winner.
- Play 1-2 rounds of this

Closing Thoughts:

Names are very important, they make us who we are and shape us. Our names are not random, they really define who we are as a person and who we will become.

Story of How the Movement was Named

Once Yechiel Eliash created this new movement, he needed a name. So he gathered a few friends and everyone gave ideas for a name. Of all the names that were raised, they were immediately 'caught' by the proposal of Avraham Kastenbaum z"l, who was a member of the World Center of Mizrahi and Hapo'el Hamizrachi. He proposed the name Bnei Akiva, and everyone immediately knew that was the one.

Rabbi Akiva symbolized, more than anything else, the idea of Torah and Avodah. He was also a laborer, a shepherd, a national warrior, a leader and a Talmid Chacham. He truly immersed himself fully in Torah and Avodah. Rabbi Akiva saw something in every person and worked with everyone around him in order to achieve giant goals. We are the students of Rabbi Akiva - we are Rabbi Akiva " Eliash said.

Facilitate a conversation-

- What do you think of the Bnei Akiva?
- Do you think Rabbi Akiva is a fitting person to name this movement after?

Game #3: Commercial Game

- Bring a bag of random toys and things to sniff.
- Have the chanichim sit on the floor and have them take turns coming up to the front of the room.
- When it's their turn they have to randomly pick an item out of the bag and on the spot create a commercial for that item (you can give them a minute to think).
- When they finish their commercial place the item on the side and have chanichim keep coming up to make commercials until the bag is empty

Closing Thoughts:

When we have an idea, sometimes we need to just run with it and make something happen on the spot. In this game, we were forced to make something happen right away. So too Yechiel Eliash was faced with a situation where if he didn't stand up and make something happen right then and there, it would never happen. He rose to the occasion and stood up for what he believed in and created something amazing, he created Bnei Akiva! But it doesn't stop there. Every day, each one of us has to continue with the mindset of Yechiel Eliash and continue to shape Bnei Akiva and help it continuously grow into something greater and greater.

A tree needs the initial seed in order to grow, but it also needs the water, sunlight and nurture along the way, so too in Bnei Akiva. Yechiel Eliash planted the seed many years ago but we must continue to add our own "sun light" and "water" in order to help it constantly grow!

Choveret Chinuch Tevet 5778

Peula #4 Birthday Party for the Trees

Written by Jen van Amerongen, Merakezet Chinuch

Birthday Party for the Trees:

- Get shticky! Buy tree themed party hats and plates, cake, and throw a party for the trees!
- You can sing Happy Birthday and other Tu Bishvat songs.
- Have everyone go around and wish the tree a happy birthday- tell nature what you appreciate about it and give it a bracha for the new year.
- Play party games like Coke and Pepsi (change the words to make it nature themed!)
- You could have shticky Bar or Bat Mitzvah speeches for “Ilan” or “Elana”
- Why is a birthday important? What does it mean to grow up?

Similar to above, a **Sheva Minim/Brachot Party**

- Snacks are always fun!
- Teach the kids about each of the Sheva Minim and have a party eating them.
- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-seven-species/>

Game: Headbands

- Make a card for each one of the 7 minim and have one chanich hold it on their forehead (Or if you have the game, bring the headbands)
- The kid should ask the group YES or No questions to figure out which of the sheva minim they are..
- You might want to help the kids with pre-prepared questions- Ex: Am I purple or green? Do I have seeds? Am I a grain? Am I sweet? Am I sour? Do I grow on a tree?



Extra Materials/Ideas:

Assorted Tu B'Shvat games:

Source: http://www.wlcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/yom_yarok_21_childrens_games.pdf

On Tu B'Shvat I Planted...

The players form a circle. One of them says: "On Tu B'Shevat I planted an apple tree" (or any other plant beginning with the letter A). The player sitting next to him repeats his words and adds a plant of his own, beginning with the letter B: "On Tu B'Shevat I planted an apple tree and a banana tree," etc. The player who omits a plant that has been mentioned, or who can find no plant to add (in alphabetical order), is out and the game starts all over again. However, the first plant mentioned must begin with the letter at which the game stopped before.

The Orange Relay Race

The players are divided into teams. The first person in every team is given an orange. It must be passed from player to player in one of the following ways:

1. With everyone sitting on the floor, the orange is held between the feet and is passed from one pair of feet to another.
2. The orange is held between the knees and is passed from knees to knees.

The team whose orange reaches its last member first wins the race.

The Lemon-Rolling Race

The contestants are divided into teams. The first of each team has a lemon on the floor before him and a stick in his/her hand. At a given signal, s/he must roll the lemon with the help of the stick to a given target, and back to the team. The stick is handed to the next one in turn, etc. The team that finishes first wins the race. (A lemon is preferred to any other fruit because it tends to roll in a zigzag course.)

Bean Blindfold

Materials: Beans. Large bowl, large wooden spoon, blindfold

Have children sit in a circle. Blindfold participants one at a time. Scatter peanuts on the floor in a small area in front of the first child, no more than a foot. Using the wooden spoon only (not the other hand), the child scoops up the peanuts and puts them in the bowl. After each participant's turn, count the number of peanuts in the bowl. Empty the contents and move onto the next child.

Tu BiShvat Songs:

<http://www.hebrewsongs.com/tubishvat.htm#songs>

Barney Growing Song- an oldie but goodie for the younger kids

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSg3gsuLm3o>

Growing - we do it every day
We're growing when we're sleeping
And even when we play
And as we grow a little older
We can do more things,
Because I'm growing and so are you.
Each day we grow a little taller,
A little bigger, not smaller.
And we grow a little friendlier too.
We try to be a little nicer
As we grow each day,
Because I'm growing and so are you.

Growing - we do it every day
We're growing when we're sleeping
And even when we play
And as we grow a little older
We can do more things,
Because I'm growing and so are you.
Each day we grow a little taller,
A little bigger, not smaller.
And we grow a little friendlier too.
We try to be a little nicer
As we grow each day,
Because I'm growing and so are you. x2

Making the Desert Bloom- Israel and Hydroponic Planting

<https://www.israel21c.org/teaching-the-world-how-to-make-the-desert-bloom/>

<http://www.itrade.gov.il/india/2016/01/28/hydroponics-latest-from-israel/>