

## Storytelling and Crafts

### HONI THE CIRCLE MAKER

Many years ago in the land of Israel lived a man called Honi the Circle Maker. Sometimes he would talk to God, asking God for rain for the hot dusty land, while standing inside a circle he had drawn on the ground. That's why he was called, "Honi the Circle Maker!"

One day was walking along the road, when he saw a man planting a tree. Honi asked the man, "How long will it be until the tree you are planting will give you something to eat?"

"Seventy years," said the man.

"So why are you planting that tree? Do you think you will be around to eat its fruit in seventy years?" asked Honi.

"I don't know," said the man, "but I do know that I found trees with fruit that someone else planted a long time ago. I want to plant trees so my children will find trees with fruit as I did."

Then Honi understood how important it is to plant trees. We eat the fruit from trees that someone else planted a long time ago, and we plant trees so that our children have food to eat as well.

#### Questions for Discussion:

What did Honi see the man doing alongside the road?

What was Honi's question to the man? What do you think about his question to him?

Does Honi's question sound selfish to you?

What did the man answer Honi? What did you think of his answer?

How do your parents and grandparents plan for *your* future?

## THE SHEKEDIAH – THE ALMOND TREE

### A Traditional Tu B'Shevat Story

Everyone was whispering in the forest. “The birthday of the trees is coming, the birthday of the trees is coming!” they said. The whole forest was happy . . . all except the shekediah, the almond tree. She looked at her dry, brown branches, and said, “I wish that I had a pretty birthday dress to wear.” She was so very sad that she would have to celebrate her birthday without anything nice to wear. She was afraid that everyone else would be dressed in something special at the big birthday celebration. What should she do? She was so unhappy that she decided to hide!

The day before the birthday of trees arrived. No one had seen the shekeydiah for some time. They were all wondering where she was. Finally, a drop of rain saw her crying in her hiding place.

“Don’t worry, little shekediah,” said the raindrop. “The sun and I will help you get a pretty dress for the birthday party.”

“Oh, thank you, raindrop!” said the shkediah, “I’m so glad you and the sun will help me.”

The shekediah felt much better, and stopped hiding. That night, when she went to sleep, she dreamt that she was wearing a beautiful pink and white party dress. She woke up the next morning to find that she WAS covered in pink and white – in pink and white FLOWERS!

When the animals and the other trees found her at last, they didn’t even know who she was! Finally they recognized her, and everyone told her how wonderful her dress of flowers was! They all went off to the trees’ birthday party together. Ever since then, the shekeydiah has always been the first to be ready for Tu B’Shevat, the birthday of the trees, by getting dressed in her beautiful pink and white flowers. If you are ever lucky enough to be in the Land of Israel in the winter, you will be able to see her, and tell her “Happy Birthday!”

#### Questions for Discussion:

Why was the shekediah upset?

What made her happy?

What is another name for Tu B’Shevat? [The birthday of trees]

What does *your* birthday commemorate?



## **CRAFT ACTIVITY**

### **Fruit Tree or Shekediah**

#### **Materials:**

- construction paper, preferably brown and green *or* pre-cut tree trunks and foliage
  - colored tissue paper: pink, white, yellow, orange, red, purple
  - scissors
  - glue
1. Have children cut out tree trunks, attach green foliage to the tree trunk or use pre-cut trees.
  2. Cut up (or tear) bits of tissue paper, crumple them and glue them to the tree (Honi's Fruit Tree can be yellow, red, orange, purple; the *shkediah* should be pink and white).