

Our Relationship to the Land: Meaning of the Omer

Alternate Lesson Plan for More Text Oriented Groups

Note: This is a great option for those classes/ groups who wish to use the ongoing rhythm of *Parshat HaShavuah* (weekly Torah portion) learning as a means of introducing Environmental Education components.

Suggested Preparation: The readings below may have already been assigned and given to you and your class to prepare as a homework assignment before you meet as a group. They should be read along with the actual Parsha for which each *Dvar Torah* is indicated. In this case, you may use the group time to process the material, using the organizers provided and take the initiative to do some searches for follow up materials. This would be a wonderful opportunity to use the site of <http://www.greenflagschools.org> to locate additional follow up information and activities.

Let's think about this together: G-d is the ultimate strategic planner. G-d sets everything in place and gives us continual reminders about how we are to “keep it all going,” constantly balancing our role of working and using the land with our role of maintaining and guarding the land, as we discussed in earlier lessons. Now, as we move through the season of *Sefirat HaOmer*, we see these reminders in our cycle of readings in *Parshat Hashavuah*. In this activity, the teacher will divide the class into smaller learning groups, and give each student the appropriate material from the *Parshiot* that we read during this season.

For the purposes of this lesson, we will be using the following materials from: Etz Chayim Hee: A Torah Commentary for Environmental Learning and Action, Canfei Nesharim Publication, sponsored by the Gaia Fund, 2008.

To locate these materials: Note that the link for these materials is parsha/ Go to this website and scroll down the Parshat HaShavuah list until you get to each of these texts.

Additional web connections suggested are as follows:

[Holidays/a-tool-for-nature-consciousness/](#) (omer)

[tubshevat/the-land-is-mine/](#) (shmittah/Sabbatical year and relationship to land)

[Holidays/an-ecological-synthesis/](#) (omer)

[science/connect-food-land/](#) (land and food related action suggestions)
[science/native-species/](#) (connecting to your own land/backyard)
[torah/lech-lecha-justice-in-the-land/](#) (Abraham and Lot sharing the land)
[eikev-shivat-haminim-seven-fruits-israel](#) (on the fruits of the land of Israel)

Alternatively, each group in your class can be given one of the following texts from the hard copy of these materials (copies can be made for the purpose of this lesson and experience):

- Parshat Shemini, “An Abundance of Fish,” by Candace Nachman, pp. 87 – 89.
- Parshat Tazria, “Healing Ourselves, Healing Our Planet,” by Rabbi Natan Greenberg, pp. 90 – 93.
- Parshat Metzora, “Natural Healing,” by Ramona Rubin, pp. 94 – 96.
- Parshat Acherei Mot, “Raising up the Physical Sustainably: Lessons of the Ketoret,” by Baruch Herschkopff, pp. 97 – 100.
- Parshat Kedoshim, “Corporate and Consumer Responsibility,” by Rabbi Carmi Wisemon, pp. 101 – 104.
- Parshat Emor, “Our Relationship to Other Creatures,” by Ora Sheinson, pp. 105 – 108.
- Parshat Behar, “The Mitzva of Shemita/The Sabbatical Year,” by Noam Yehuda Sendor, pp. 109 – 112.
- Parshat Bechukotai, “The Blessing of Rain,” by Jonathan Neril, pp. 113 – 116.

Your teacher will instruct you how to use these materials.

Possible Follow-up Actions to Take:

1. Consider sharing this lesson with your family an appropriate moment, perhaps around the Shabbat dinner table, during the appropriate weeks. Educating others and sharing learning information with family and friends is an important action that all of us can take.
2. The class can make a composite list of all of the actions that can be taken and commit themselves to actual implementation of agreed upon actions to work consciously and purposefully towards attaining Environmental Sustainability.

3. The class can take the list in #2 and put it in a public place in the school to monitor changes in behaviors amongst the students, faculty and other members of the academic community. The focus here is AWARENESS of what we can do to work towards Environmental Sustainability and Health of our larger community. You could even monitor expenses for disposable products in the school and any changes in expenses for that, use of electricity, etc. in the school community. Get everyone involved and show how its to the collective benefit to be aware of these practices and watch them.

4. The class can look at the various activity links and choose a few actions to actually take on for the school, as suggested here in #3 and in the various materials indicated.

Information Organizer

Text and Intentions/Instructions in *Parshat* _____:

What Has Gone Wrong in our Reality/ Problems We Confront:

Possible Actions Suggested That Could Bring Healing and *Izzun*:

Information Organizer

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