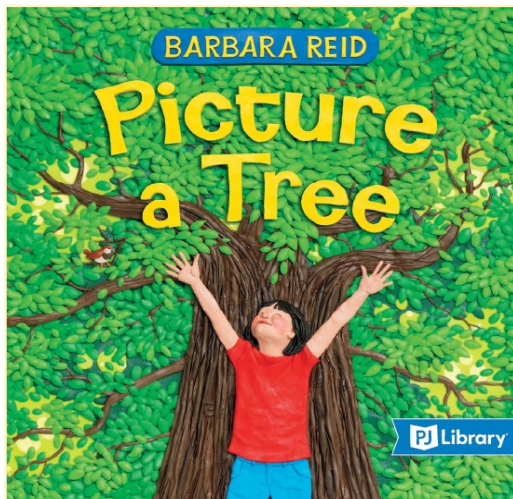


written by
Barbara Reid

illustrated by
Barbara Reid



{ What kind of tree would you like to be? }

A Tree with Many Stories

Trees have sprouted in Jewish stories going back to the earliest chapters of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). In the Book of Genesis, the Garden of Eden features the Tree of Knowledge. The metaphor of etz hayim, Hebrew for “Tree of Life,” which comes from the Book of Proverbs, compares the Torah itself to a tree. The Talmud (the core collection of rabbinic writings) tells of Honi, who wonders why an old man is planting a carob tree if he will not live to eat its fruit. The man replies that he is planting for the next generation. For centuries, the Jewish people have “pictured a tree” -- literally and symbolically -- to express our hopes and values. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/pictureatree.

HANDS ON!

Make a Yarn Tree

Make a beautiful tree to share with the world!

Supplies:

Construction paper

Markers and/or crayons

Glue

Colored yarn cut into small pieces

Draw a tree trunk using a brown marker or crayon.

Drizzle glue onto the paper above the tree.

Sprinkle the yarn pieces over the glue, and press down so that they stick.

As the project dries, you can talk about the tree you have created: What color is the yarn? What season do you think it is for your tree, based on the color? Is this tree a “baby,” “in-between,” or “grown-up”? Do you have a tree like this in your yard or neighborhood right now?

When it's dry, display your tree in the window for all to admire. Happy Tu B'Shevat!

Let's Go Nuts!

Judaism has a holiday dedicated to trees: Tu B'Shevat, the “New Year of the Trees.” Many families mark this holiday by having a Tu B'Shevat seder (ritual meal) featuring fruits and nuts from trees. A Tu B'Shevat seder also includes four cups of wine or grape juice to represent the four seasons. Eating foods like walnuts or pistachios, which have a hard shell, can remind us how the earth protects us.

Seasons Come and Go

Seasons change, and as this book says, “You may see the end of one thing, or the start of something new.” Tu B'Shevat offers the opportunity to explore nature, ecology, and environmental responsibility in the context of Judaism. For example, we can honor the environment by recycling or composting, processes that turn an ending into a beginning. Even if it takes place in cold weather, Tu B'Shevat is a reminder that “every winter tree holds spring, sleeping like a baby.” This holiday grounds us, literally, in our tradition's strong connection with earth's wonders, while also reminding us that spring's blossoms are right around the corner.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

THIS book imagines trees as many things: a dressed-up person, an ocean, a high-rise building, a pirate ship, a skeleton. What else can you imagine a tree to be?

THIS book says a tree can be “a friend.” How can we treat trees as friends?

WHAT is your favorite time of year for trees? Why?