



# UNIQUE AND CONNECTED

A Second Nuture Resource for Tu B'Shevat



Once, when Rav Abraham Kook was walking in the fields, lost deep in thought, the young student with him inadvertently plucked a leaf off a branch. Rav Kook was visibly shaken by this act, and turning to his companion he said gently, "Believe me when I tell you I never simply pluck a leaf or a blade of grass or any living thing, unless I have to." He explained further, "Every part of the vegetable world is singing a song and breathing forth a secret of the divine mystery of the Creation." For the first time the young student understood what it means to show compassion to all creatures.

(Wisdom of the Mystics)



#### Midrash Tanchuma: Lech Lecha 5:4

#### Psalm 92:13

צָדִיק כְּתִמֵּר יִפְרַח כְּאֶרֶז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגַּח

The righteous bloom like a date-palm; they thrive like a cedar in Lebanon;

וְהָאֶרֶץ וְהַתִּמְרֵי מִשְׁנֻקְצִין, מִי יוּכַל לַעֲלֹת בְּמִקְוִמוֹ אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן בִּיגִיעָה גְדוּלָּה לְשָׁנִים הַרְבֵּה. כִּי אִם אֲבָד צָדִיק מִן הָעוֹלָם, מִי יוּכַל לַעֲמֹד בְּמִקְוִמוֹ מִיָּד אֶלָּא לְשָׁנִים הַרְבֵּה, לְפִיכָךְ צָדִיק כְּתִמֵּר יִפְרַח.

When the palm tree and the cedar are hewn down, another can be grown to replace it only with great toil over many years. Similarly, when the righteous person perishes, who can replace them immediately? Many years must first pass by. Therefore, the righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, etc.

#### Foster Care and the Natural World

How do you understand Rav Kook's teaching? What feeling does his belief elicit in you?  
How might it shed light on kids in foster care?

What loss have you experienced—on a national or personal level—that has taken toil and years to tend to? In lived experience "replace"ment is not an option. What might we actually seek?

Sometimes we are "hewn down" internally. How do we nurture life back into ourselves? When a child comes into a family from foster care, how might we seek to nurture the life inside that child?