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GRANDPA'S TREE

Study Guide

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GUIDE TO "GRANDPA'S TREE"

INTRODUCTION

This guide to "Grandpa's Tree" is intended to provide background information for some of the topics mentioned in the video, so that the presenter will be able to impart these additional facts for the benefit of the viewers.

An important point to remember is that a video is not suitable for presentation to a large audience, because of the small size of the screen. For best results, show it to a group no larger than 50. If possible, combine the same age level. The success of any film depends on the preparation of the presenter. He/she should not only have viewed the video, but should also be thoroughly familiar with the content of this guide.

The following topics are covered:

1. Suggestions for viewing
2. The Jewish National Fund
3. Tu bi-Shevat
4. Alexander Zeid
5. Yatir

SYNOPSIS

In the videocassette, "Grandpa's Tree", we meet Jonathan Miller, a young American musician, on his arrival in Israel. He has come to participate in a Tu bi-Shevat concert, to which he has been officially invited. But he also has a private mission: to locate a tree his grandfather had planted many years ago.

A tree certificate as his only document, we follow Jonathan to various locations, and meet Israelis of different walks of life in his pursuit of the tree. Through Jonathan's eyes, we see Israel as it is now, and get a glimpse into the barren landscape it has been. We meet Israelis working in JNF forests at the present, and we learn about the first "forest ranger", Alexander Zeid. We travel with Jonathan north, to the Jezreel Valley, Kibbutz Yavneh, in the southern region of Israel, to Yatir, in the Negev, and finally, to Jerusalem. At the Keren Kayemeth Leisrael headquarters, Jonathan at last receives some hint of where his grandpa's tree might be found, and we rejoice with Jonathan as he locates the tree he had been seeking.

The video concludes with a concert in the streets of Jerusalem. A number of songs are interwoven into the video, adding to the spirit of the film. "Grandpa's Tree"

is entertaining as well as educational, suited for youngsters and adults alike.

Viewing time: 24 minutes.

1. SUGGESTIONS FOR VIEWING

This video can be shown well before Tu bi-Shevat as a trigger, or during a Tu bi-Shevat celebration, marking the culmination of the study of the holiday. Before showing the video, display a map of Israel and follow this procedure:

- a. Ask students who have been to Israel to name the sites that they visited.
- b. Ask for the name of Israel's international airport.
- c. Mention the places Jonathan visits in the film.
- d. Have students locate the various sites mentioned in the film.
- e. Trace Jonathan's travel route, starting with Ben-Gurion Airport.

This activity will involve students and thus create an atmosphere of closeness between the students and Israel.

Whether the video serves as a trigger, or is shown at a Tu bi-Shevat celebration, time should be taken to impart the topics detailed below. Only then will the video be fully utilized and become a learning tool as well as entertainment.

2. THE JEWISH NATIONAL FUND - KEREN KAYEMETH LEISRAEL

Zvi Hermann Schapira proposed the establishment of a fund for the purpose of land purchase in Eretz Yisrael, during the First Zionist Congress in 1897. No action was taken at that time.

Schapira died in 1898, but his idea lived on. It took a number of years from the inception of the idea, to its translation into a workable organization. During the Fifth Zionist Congress in Basle in 1901, a resolution was passed to create the Keren Kayemeth Leisrael, JNF. The basic tenet of the fund is national ownership of the land; it would be leased for a period of 49 years, with contracts to be automatically renewed, insuring economic and social continuity. This is based on the biblical injunction, "V'haaretz lo timaher lezmetut, ke le haaretz -- But the land must not be sold beyond reclaim, for the land is mine" (Lev. 25:23). In biblical days, when a farmer was forced to sell his land, the land had to be

returned to him at the end of a 49 year period. This law of the Jubilee was designed to protect the farmer from total and eternal poverty, and assured the borders of the land allotted to each tribe. It was the same principle which moved the JNF to declare national ownership of the land in Israel, thereby preventing the danger of land speculation.

Land purchases represented merely the first phase of the many activities in which JNF became involved. Before settling the land, many problems had to be solved: swamps and marshlands had to be drained, sands and dunes prevented from shifting, water brought to the Negev, and desalinization of water, explored. These activities not only developed the country, providing homes for newcomers, it also insured for many of them, sources of income.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the functions and responsibilities of the JNF underwent changes. Land, which became part of Israel after the War of Independence, was turned over to the JNF for development. The Israeli government (Knesset), passed the Land Authority Bill in 1960. It gives the JNF exclusive rights to land reclamation, land development and afforestation in the entire country.

Financial support for the work of the JNF comes from Jews all over the world who can choose between various means of contributing to the activities of the JNF. In addition to JNF's activities of land reclamation and afforestation, it is also vitally involved in the field of education in Israel and wherever Jews live. Materials on Zionism and Israel are published and disseminated in order to strengthen the link between the Jewish people and their land.

3. TU BI-SHEVAT

Tu bi-Shevat is called "Rosh hashana lailanot", because it marks the New Year of the trees. According to Jewish tradition, this date is of great importance in connection with two laws. One, the Orlah, a law which states that man may eat the fruit of a tree only after four years, and two, the Maaser, a fruit offering which was brought to the Bet Hamikdash, the Temple.

After the destruction of the second Bet Hamikdash (70 B.C.E.), and the uprooting of the Jews from Eretz Yisrael, the laws connected with agriculture were no longer enforced. From that time on, the age of a tree was no longer important, and the observance of Tu bi-Shevat took on a symbolic meaning.

Numerous traditions evolved among the exiled people, with one basic leitmotif common to all: an expression of longing to Eretz Yisrael. Among Sephardi communities, Tu bi-Shevat was celebrated with a Seder, complete with the reading of a Haggadah and the drinking of four cups of wine. This custom is now revived and has been adopted by many. Eating fruit which grows in Eretz Yisrael was the centerpiece of every Tu bi-Shevat celebration, no matter how difficult it was to obtain such fruit.

It is the Jewish National Fund, however, which infused Tu bi-Shevat with a new meaning, a special appeal, involving young and old: the Mitzvah of planting trees and reclaiming the land. This is one of the ways that offers an opportunity to express concern and love for Israel.

In Israel, for hundreds of school children and their teachers, Tu bi-Shevat brings the pleasure of an outing into the countryside, which is just awakening and responding to the spring sun. In areas designated by the Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael, children swarm into the fields and plant tiny saplings. The air is filled with song and laughter.

Within years, these previously barren fields will be covered with the green of trees, adding to the beauty and a safe environment for Israel.

4. ALEXANDER ZEID (1886 - 1938)

Among the early pioneers in Eretz Yisrael was the heroic figure of Alexander Zeid. As a youngster of 18, he arrived in Eretz Yisrael from Russia (1904), determined to build a homeland for the Jewish people. Realizing that the isolated Jewish farms and vineyards scattered throughout the land were vulnerable to attacks and theft by Arabs, he committed himself early on to work as a shomer (guard). This led him, together with others, to establish a secret defense organization, Bar Giora (1907), which later evolved into the "Hashomer - The Guardian" (1909).

Zeid believed that in order for Jews to live in peace with Arabs, two goals must be pursued: one, to establish many settlements, so that the presence of the Jews cannot be questioned, and two, Jews must get to know their Arab neighbors, their language and customs. Even though he was often attacked by Arabs, he did not change his attitude.

In 1932, after helping found Tel-Adashim and Tel-Hai, he settled his family in Sheikh Abrek, an Arab area in Emek Jezreel, the Jezreel Valley. Part of the day

he devoted to farming, assisted by his wife and three sons; but he also remained a "Shomer". Zeid was employed by the Jewish National Fund to guard the many new settlements and forests dotting the Jezreel Valley. One could see him riding on his horse, a rifle at his side, through the emerging fields and forests. He guarded forests not only against intruders, but against forest fires as well.

Exploring the surroundings of Sheikh Abrek, he was one of the first ones to discover the historic site of Bet She'arim, the burial place of the Rabbis of the Mishnaic period (up to the year 200 C.E.).

Zeid's love and devotion to the land are legendary, and it is not surprising that he did not shy away from performing his duty even during the perilous period of fierce Arab riots during the 1930's. It was in 1938, while standing guard on his horse, that an Arab bullet found its mark and killed Alexander Zeid. His wife Zipporah and their sons found him dead on the ground. Zipporah, without hesitation, carried on with the same determination as Alexander. The farm in Sheikh Abrek was not abandoned, and the Zeid family, children and grandchildren, live in this historic house. It is this very house which Jonathan Miller visits.

When a new settlement was established in the Jezreel Valley, it was called "Givat Zeid". A statue of Alexander Zeid and his horse, stands on the site where he was killed, overlooking the fields and forests which he so loved and guarded all his life.

5. YATIR

The Yatir region is part of the Negev, its most eastern border is the Dead Sea. As the rest of the Negev, it has a harsh climate, reflected by a desolate landscape. Yet, the potential of the Negev cannot be ignored, since it represents over 60% of Israel's land area. It was David Ben-Gurion who had the vision of a Negev populated with settlers, villages and towns filling the vast expanse, fields and forests flourishing on sand dunes. Ben-Gurion realized that with the help of scientists, methods could be found to utilize the rain and the dew, convert salty water and sewage so that it would be fit for irrigation, and find vegetation that would grow even in the desert. The JNF was in the forefront of those who responded to the challenge of transforming the barren Negev into green fields. On a personal level, Ben-Gurion set an example to Israel's youth by settling in Kibbutz Sde Boker, where an agricultural station was set up. It is perhaps symbolic that the video "Grandpa's Tree", which emphasizes the transformation of the Negev, was produced during the year of the Ben-Gurion Centennial.

In the Yatir region, the JNF helped establish the settlements of Bet Yatir, and Metzudat Yehuda. But most important for the ecology and the population of the area, a large parcel of land is designated for the Yatir forest. It contains Bet Hayaaran, a forestry station, and recreation centers for all those who flock there to enjoy the comfort and beauty offered by the trees.

In 1982, a Jewish Educators' Forest was dedicated within the Yatir forest. It has become the destination of pilgrimages for educators on their visits to Israel. There, they add to the transformation of the Negev, by planting additional saplings in the Educators' Forest, establishing a permanent link between them and Israel.