

Spin It: Trees Appendix Aleph

From <http://www.torah-trek.org/torah-trek-educators-corner/meet-a-tree>:

MEET-A-TREE

Objectives:

1. To develop tactile, olfactory and other senses.
2. To foster the development of a personal relationship with nature.
3. To build a community of learners with a shared experience
4. To enhance trust amongst campers.
5. To introduce the tree as a symbol present in Jewish law, tradition and thought.

Type of activity: Game

Source: Adapted from Joseph Cornell, [Sharing Nature: Nature Awareness Activities for All Ages](#)

Time: 10-20 minutes

When to play: Day

Where to play: Outside

Age level: 7 years and up

Players needed: 6-20 (or more)

Materials needed: Bandanas are optional, area with trees

How to play:

- Have campers pair off and give each pair a blindfold.
- Blindfold one of the pair. The sighted camper leads their partner to a tree that interests him – he should lead his/her partner to the tree in an indirect way to make it more interesting.
- **Make sure the sighted camper takes care of their sight-impaired partner. There is a Jewish value here, and it comes from Leviticus 19:14, “do not place a stumbling block before the blind.” THIS IS A HUGE SAFETY ISSUE!**
- The blindfolded camper explores the tree, trying to imprint the tree’s characteristics in his/her mind so he’ll be able to find the tree again. Encourage the camper’s exploration by suggesting that s/he:
 - Feel for plants growing on or around it, feel for signs that animals use the tree
 - Feel the bark. How thick is it? Is it rough or smooth?
 - Put your arms around the tree to measure it
 - Smell the tree
- To add humor, you can suggest campers can lick the tree, kiss the tree, speak with the tree, etc.
- Once the blindfolded camper feels they know the tree well, the sighted partner will lead her/him back to the starting place.
- Encourage campers to take a different route back, stepping over imaginary rocks, ducking under pretend branches, etc. – make it a fun challenge for the blindfolded camper to find his/her tree.

- Once back at the starting point, remove the blindfold and the camper tries to find the tree with his/her eyes open. Then have the partners switch roles.

Debrief:

There are a variety of discussions that can ensue once the group is back together again.

- Each camper can lead the group to his/her tree to showcase something unique about it. This can take a while, so you may ask for only 2-3 people to show their trees.
- Ask campers to talk about what senses they used to explore their tree.
- Ask campers to talk about what methods they used to figure out which tree was theirs once they opened their eyes – memory of their path, smell of the area, feeling plants around the tree, etc.
- Begin a conversation about the roles of trees in the environment – are there characteristics of their trees that help them understand those roles – nook used as a dwelling place for animals, leaves as the place of conversion of carbon dioxide to oxygen, roots holding the soil in place, etc.?
- Do the campers notice anything Jewish about the trees? Introduce examples of trees as symbols in Jewish law, tradition and thought. Here are a few examples:
 - The Mitzvah of *Bal Tashchit* (the law against waste found in Deuteronomy 20:19),
 - *Eitzim*– the “trees” on which the Torah scroll is rolled
 - Planting trees in Israel
- Why do we call the Torah *Etz Haim* in Hebrew?

Hints for success:

- Say it in your own words. You can speak your own words most clearly. Don't like the way this is written, rewrite it!
- Perhaps read *The Lorax* before or after the program in order for campers to think more about trees. Try reading *The Apple Tree's Discovery* (see below).
- For more Jewish content, include a blessing like the "*She'hechianu*" for the first time playing this game.
- Have fun, this is a game and should be treated like one!