

**Choosing and Using Primary Texts Webinar**  
 Session Three – Tu B'shvat and Case Studies



**I. Tu B'Shvat**

**1) The Overstory, Richard Powers, pp. 130**

You and the tree in your backyard come from a common ancestor. A billion and a half years ago, the two of you parted ways. But even now, after an immense journey in separate directions, that tree and you still share a quarter of your genes. . . .”

**2) Psalms 92:13**

A righteous person will bloom like a date-palm;  
 they thrive like a cedar in Lebanon;

**תהילים צ"ב:י"ג**

צדיק כַּתְמָר יִפְרַח כְּאַרְז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה:

*Questions for reflection:*

- Why do you think a righteous person is compared to a tree?
- What does this text teach you about trees? About human beings?

**3) Bamidbar Rabbah 3:1**

*A righteous person will bloom like a date palm.*

No part of the date palm is wasted: Its dates are eaten; its young branches are used for ritual blessing [of the lulav on sukkot]; its fronds cover the Sukkah; its fibers are used to make ropes; its leaves are used for sieves; its planed trunks are used for roof beams. So too there are none who we should regard as unwanted in the people of Israel: Some are versed in the Bible; others know Mishnah; some are masters of aggadah [storytelling]; others do good deeds; still others do acts of justice and kindness.

**במדבר רבה ג:א**

צדיק כתמר יפרח -

דָּבָר אַחֵר, מֵהַ תְּמָרָה זֶה אֵין בָּהּ פְּסוּלָת אֲלֵא תְמָרִים לְאַכִּילָהּ, לוּלָבִין לְהַלּוּל, חֲרִיטוֹת לְסִפּוּף, סִיבִים לְחֻבְלִים, סְנִסְנִים לְכִבְרָה, שְׁפָעַת קוֹרוֹת לְקָרוֹת בְּהֵן אֵת הַבֵּית.

כִּדְּהֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵין בָּהֶם פְּסוּלָת אֲלֵא מֵהֶם בְּעַלֵי מִקְרָא, מֵהֶם בְּעַלֵי מִשְׁנָה, מֵהֶם בְּעַלֵי אַגְדָּה, מֵהֶם בְּעַלֵי מַצּוֹת, מֵהֶם בְּעַלֵי צְדָקוֹת.

*Questions for reflection:*

- How does this text understand why the verse in Psalms compares the righteous to a tree?
- How is this text using the metaphor of a date tree to teach an important lesson about community? What does it teach us about the use of the word “righteous”?

**And – an amazing resource on Tu B'shvat from our friends at Pardes –**

<https://elmad.pardes.org/holidays/tu-bshvat/2025/02/the-many-authentic-facelifts-of-tu-bshvat/>