

## Tu Bishvat: Broken Twigs; Potential Orchards



*Tu Bishvat Lesson Plan and Wall Display*  
*Level: High School*

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**Introduction:** We know that Tu Bishvat is the new year for the trees. *Why do the trees celebrate their new year, so much later than us?*

The answer is that from RH, it takes four months for the rains to prepare the soil for the trees to produce fruits.

One of the most amazing things a tree teaches us, is about survival. Even if a terrible storm or wild animal will tear apart a fruit tree and smash it utterly; as long as one twig remains, we can plant it on its own, or graft it onto another far less fruitful tree.


This cutting will flourish as a tree bearing beautiful fruit — fruit of the same flavour the original tree had; or alternatively, it will greatly enrich and increase the productivity of the tree into which it was grafted.

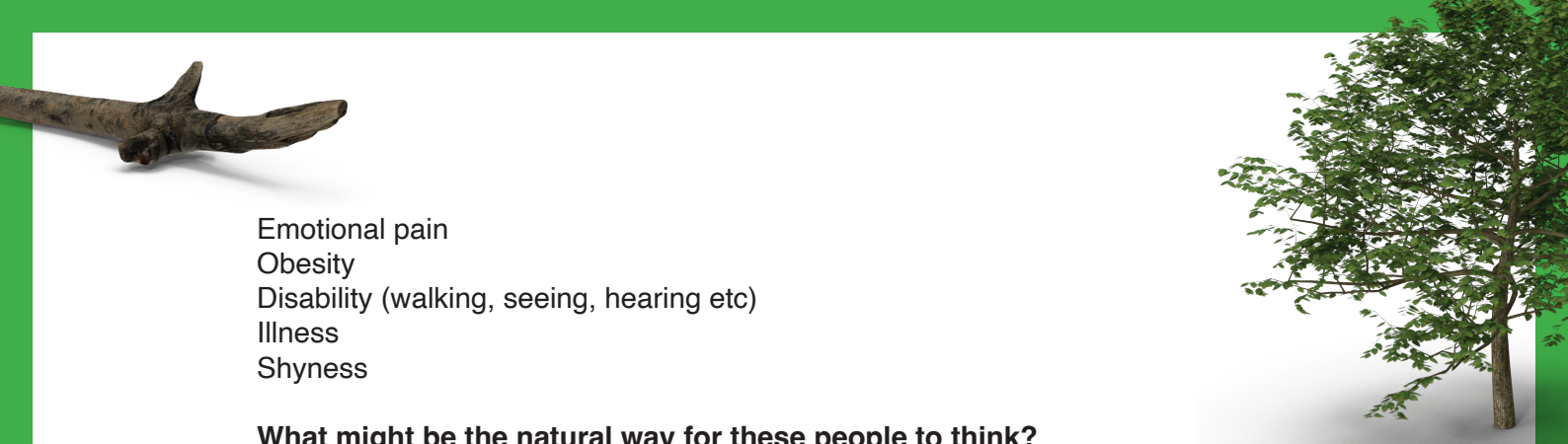
**Application:** There are many Holocaust survivors whose lives were completely shattered; they lost everything. They survived the Holocaust as broken and scattered twigs. Yet, somehow, they managed to use these cuttings and build beautiful families with them. Their broken twigs were truly 'fruitful'.

There are so many people today who feel crushed by society. They feel like their trees have been destroyed and all they have are broken twigs. The pain levels can vary from more obvious pain to things that could seem to you to be very minor.

**Can you think of some examples? What circumstances could make a person feel that way?**

Single parent homes  
Parent / sibling passed away  
Talents not recognised / overlooked / never been given a chance  
Not being understood / appreciated  
Friendship issues / bullying  
Struggling academically  
Not being judged favourably  
Struggling financially  
Too short / tall  
Not enough attention within family





Emotional pain  
Obesity  
Disability (walking, seeing, hearing etc)  
Illness  
Shyness

**What might be the natural way for these people to think?**

That's it, I've had enough. Why me?? Why do I have to suffer so much?

**Which type of qualities are required to begin the growth process?** (Teacher should make a spider diagram on the board. Each point can be a discussion)

Determination  
Focus (learning how to block out what's unimportant)  
Right environment (What does this mean? How does this affect one's growth)  
Resilience (must be nurtured from when one is very young)  
Honesty (authenticity, being open)  
Calmness- patience  
Positivity  
Humility (being willing to accept advice to listen and to learn from others)

**Worksheet:** Students will receive a blank tree with different resources and they need to fill in different qualities that they find in their own families (no need to mention any names). i.e. from my mother I understand what resilience means, from my father I learnt the meaning of focus etc...

**Discuss:** There are two types of attitudes that a person can have:

A fixed mindset  
A growth mindset.

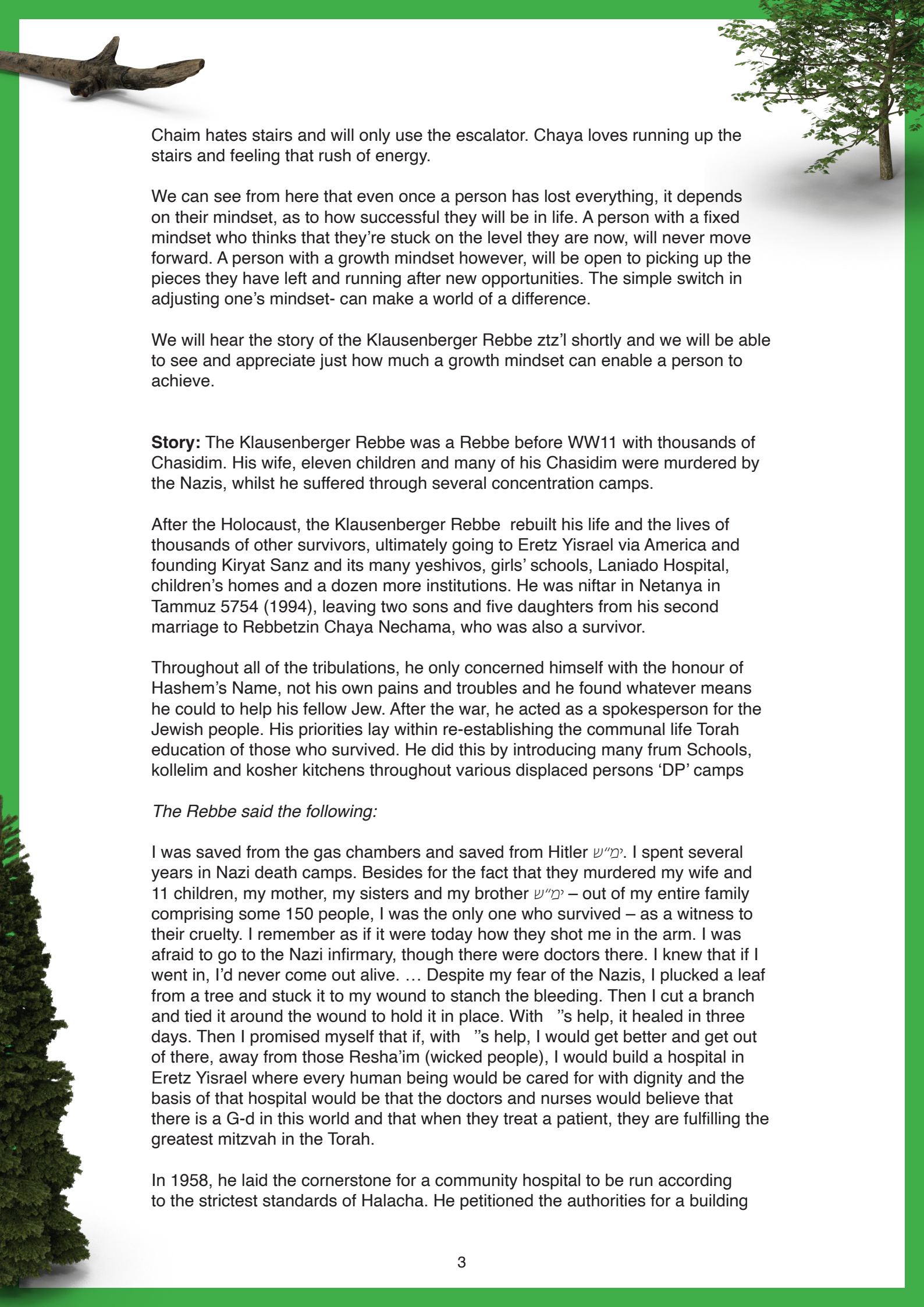
A fixed mindset is someone who believes that people have fixed traits and that these traits are responsible for their success. With a growth mindset, people realize that new skills can be acquired through practice. This view engenders a love for learning and it's something that great leaders have in common. To develop a growth mindset, people should celebrate 'trying'.

*Let's bring two children as an example.*

Chaim has a fixed mindset; he thinks that a person is either blessed with ability or is lacking in it. Chaya, with her growth mindset, knows that she can learn anything that she wants to learn, as long as she wants it hard enough. In sports lessons, Chaim is afraid of challenges; he doesn't want to look stupid or be laughed at. Chaya embraces every challenge. She knows that failing is a part of learning and in the end, she will succeed.

Chaim avoids feedback. If the teacher tells him how to improve an assignment, he takes it personally. Chaya knows that in order to become the best that she can be, she needs to listen to constructive criticism. She also understands that it's not she who is being assessed, but rather the results of her work from that day.





Chaim hates stairs and will only use the escalator. Chaya loves running up the stairs and feeling that rush of energy.

We can see from here that even once a person has lost everything, it depends on their mindset, as to how successful they will be in life. A person with a fixed mindset who thinks that they're stuck on the level they are now, will never move forward. A person with a growth mindset however, will be open to picking up the pieces they have left and running after new opportunities. The simple switch in adjusting one's mindset- can make a world of a difference.

We will hear the story of the Klausenberger Rebbe ztz"l shortly and we will be able to see and appreciate just how much a growth mindset can enable a person to achieve.

**Story:** The Klausenberger Rebbe was a Rebbe before WW11 with thousands of Chasidim. His wife, eleven children and many of his Chasidim were murdered by the Nazis, whilst he suffered through several concentration camps.



After the Holocaust, the Klausenberger Rebbe rebuilt his life and the lives of thousands of other survivors, ultimately going to Eretz Yisrael via America and founding Kiryat Sanz and its many yeshivos, girls' schools, Laniado Hospital, children's homes and a dozen more institutions. He was niftar in Netanya in Tammuz 5754 (1994), leaving two sons and five daughters from his second marriage to Rebbetzin Chaya Nechama, who was also a survivor.

Throughout all of the tribulations, he only concerned himself with the honour of Hashem's Name, not his own pains and troubles and he found whatever means he could to help his fellow Jew. After the war, he acted as a spokesperson for the Jewish people. His priorities lay within re-establishing the communal life Torah education of those who survived. He did this by introducing many frum Schools, kollelim and kosher kitchens throughout various displaced persons 'DP' camps

*The Rebbe said the following:*

I was saved from the gas chambers and saved from Hitler שׂוֹד. I spent several years in Nazi death camps. Besides for the fact that they murdered my wife and 11 children, my mother, my sisters and my brother שׂוֹד – out of my entire family comprising some 150 people, I was the only one who survived – as a witness to their cruelty. I remember as if it were today how they shot me in the arm. I was afraid to go to the Nazi infirmary, though there were doctors there. I knew that if I went in, I'd never come out alive. ... Despite my fear of the Nazis, I plucked a leaf from a tree and stuck it to my wound to stanch the bleeding. Then I cut a branch and tied it around the wound to hold it in place. With ׀'s help, it healed in three days. Then I promised myself that if, with ׀'s help, I would get better and get out of there, away from those Resha'im (wicked people), I would build a hospital in Eretz Yisrael where every human being would be cared for with dignity and the basis of that hospital would be that the doctors and nurses would believe that there is a G-d in this world and that when they treat a patient, they are fulfilling the greatest mitzvah in the Torah.

In 1958, he laid the cornerstone for a community hospital to be run according to the strictest standards of Halacha. He petitioned the authorities for a building



permit, but was not granted one for many years. The Rebbe spent 15 years raising funds to build the hospital, which would later be named Laniado Hospital, after the Laniado brothers; two bankers from Switzerland whose estate provided a \$300,000 donation for the Rebbe. The hospital's first building, an outpatient clinic, opened in 1975. Within the next few years, a maternity ward, emergency room, internal medicine department, cardiology unit and an intensive-care unit opened. The hospital continued to expand, and today encompasses two medical centres, a children's hospital, a geriatric centre and a nursing school, serving a regional population of over 450,000. The Rebbe continued to plan and supervise the expansion of the hospital until his death in 1994.

If we look objectively however, all of the signs were there for him to give up. His wife and many children were all murdered. He saw death constantly before his eyes, as the Nazis mocked their victims shortly before murdering them. The Klausenberger Rebbe witnessed unimaginable pain. And yet, a flame burned within this man; a flame of defiance, which caused him to act against logic and defy his enemies through his relentless devotion to Hashem.

Instead of sitting down and focusing on the unimaginable losses he had endured, he chose to look ahead and focus on rebuilding from amongst the ashes.

Look what can happen when we hold on tightly to our branch (the roots and family legacy that we stem from), becoming aware of our potential and beginning the steps required to begin re-planting!

*Do you know any stories of other people who managed to grow beautiful things from broken pieces?*

**Activity:** Take a few minutes to think of a time when you overcame a struggle with something in school. It could be anything - from adding negative numbers, struggling socially or to writing an introduction for a difficult essay. Reflect on the times when you failed at first but by persevering, your brain created new neural connections and you eventually improved greatly in this area.

Write a letter to a future student of your class about this struggle. In at least five sentences, tell this student your story and give them advice on what they should do next time they encounter an obstacle like this. Feel free to be as creative as you would like.

**Optional video feature:** About the Klausenberger Rebbe

**Wall display:** Teacher should create a wall display featuring many assorted trees. Each student should be told that when they write their letter to a future student, they should make sure that it's not something too private. Teacher should then pin the responses onto the trees.

Wow! It will be incredible to see hands-on testimony of the different areas in which the students themselves, went through challenges and pulled through in amazing ways.

**Summary:** We discussed today about how even if someone has lost everything and they feel like nothing but a broken twig, there's still hope. If they cultivate the



growth process, then they can become very successful people beH. We talked about the Klausenberger Rebbe who lost everything in the Holocaust; his wife, his 11 children and chasidim. Yet, after the war was over, he picked up the pieces that remained and made an incredible impact across the world!

Some of the world's greatest leaders and the most successful businessmen became who they are today by taking what could have been viewed as a failure and turning them into success.

**Bonus- Taking today's lesson to a new level:** A person is usually aware of their own suffering, no matter the severity. However, to see the suffering of someone else; that is not so common.

Unfortunately in the world today, there is a lot of suffering and because there are so many things going on around us, we start to become numb. Let's begin to open our eyes to other people's pain and struggles. Let's realize that challenges come in all shapes and forms.

This week, wherever you are, notice people's faces. Read what's behind the 'smile'. Notice the weariness, the irritability and the tension. Feel in your body what it would be like for you to have the life of the other person. This will train us to become more sensitive and caring people and in turn help us to achieve so much more.

If we want to be successful, we need to be able to understand. We may never know whether, with a bit of belief and encouragement, we could have another 'Klausenberger Rebbe' in the making!





# טו בשבט

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מן בשבט

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