

“And How Can It Be That The Wheat Grows Once More”

Exploring Healing and Regrowth After Trauma



**Educational Guide
For Israel's National Days**



EDUCATOR

As we approach Israel's national days — Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzma'ut — we do so, yet again, in the shadow of war. The reverberations and great uncertainty for what the future holds have been felt across Israel and by Jewish communities around the world. This moment has forced many of us to sit with painful questions: What does it mean to lose something — a person, a home, a sense of safety — and to go on? How do we grow from here? What might healing look like?

To explore these questions, we draw on the imagery of nature — of roots, regrowth, and the stubborn return of life after devastation.

At the heart of this session are the stories of two Israeli farmers whose lives have been upended by the war: Michael Sabag, who devoted himself to protecting his fields during the war, and Gadi Moses, who returned after 482 days in captivity to rehabilitate his community and crops. These stories offer a living encounter with a person in the process of healing from unthinkable loss, holding both grief and hope. The goal of this session is to help participants sit with this dissonance and ask: What carries a person's hope and determination in the face of such loss?

Notes to Facilitator:

* This program is designed to be modular. You are encouraged to use it all or select the parts that best suit your group and the time available.

* This session touches on trauma, loss, and ongoing conflict. Please familiarize yourself fully with the material before the session and adapt the questions and activities to your group's sensitivities and needs. These themes may be especially resonant — or tender — for participants with personal connections to the events of the past two years, or who have experienced loss.

Goals

- Participants will encounter real human stories as well as texts and concepts from the natural world to explore the duality of grief and healing, of trauma and regrowth.
- Participants will reflect on what sustains a person through unthinkable loss — exploring the roots of strength and resilience in their own lives, and what grows from them.

Materials

- Computer and projector or smartboard
- Whiteboard or posterboard, and markers
- Journal paper and pens
- Smartphones or tablets with access to the internet
- 2 printed copies of ecological succession image (Appendix B) - 1 whole, 1 cut into panels
- Printed copies of the text study sheet (Appendix C)
- Music for closing activity (optional)

PART I > TRAUMA AND REGROWTH IN NATURE

Optional Opening Activity: Ecological Succession



AI generated picture *

→ Split the group into seven teams, giving each a single panel of the image (Appendix B) and a piece of paper. Give them 90 seconds to jot down as many words as possible in response to their image — what they see, what it reminds them of, and what it makes them feel. Single words are fine.

→ Invite a representative from each team to bring their image to the center of the circle (or front of the class), and ask them to place the images in order. Wait until they've shared their observations before correcting them if they make a mistake.

? What do you see in this picture? What story does it tell?

Note to Facilitator: As participants describe the image, write key words on the board — words that can be used later to describe or discuss (literally or metaphorically) the farmers' stories and the idea of healing after trauma. For example: destruction, loss, roots, regrowth, time, life, return...

→ Once they've shared their observations, reveal the correct order and briefly explain the concept the image describes:

This image represents the stages of ecological succession — the natural process by which life returns after devastation. Secondary succession happens when a natural disaster occurs, but the soil, seeds, and roots remain intact below the surface, enabling the ecosystem to recover. Life uses its hidden resources to recover and rebuild. Yet, while the soil remains, the forest that grows back is not identical to the one that burned.

Note to Facilitator:

* Secondary succession returns life – but not the same life. Our roots survive, but what grows from them may be something new, something different.

*This image is offered as a metaphor for the human experience of healing after trauma — not as a representation of the actual events of the war. The imagery, language, and framework it provides will accompany us throughout the rest of the session.

? With that in mind, take another look at the image: What story does it tell now? What captures your attention? What has changed most — and what has remained throughout?

* We're going to hold these concepts in mind as we watch the following videos.


PART II > "THIS IS NOT THE SAME VALLEY, THIS IS NOT THE SAME HOME"

OUR ROOTS ARE DEEP | MICHAEL'S STORY

Pre-Screening

→ Introduce the video and provide brief context:

Developed by the creators of the Beit Avi Chai podcast (*מפלגת המחשבות* - The Party of Ideas), this video clip takes us to northern Israel — a region deeply affected by the war. We're going to hear the stories of Michael, a farmer living on the northern border, and his daughter, Paz.

 Invite participants to open Google Maps and locate Moshav Dishon — note its proximity to the Lebanese border.

→ Before screening the video, ask participants to jot down three things that catch their attention as they watch:

- One visual image
- One quote — a word or sentence that stands out
- One feeling or question that comes up for them

Screen the video

Post-Screening Discussion

After the screening, invite participants to share their first impressions. This can be done with an online tool like Mentimeter or on a poster board or whiteboard. Use these initial responses as a springboard for the discussion that follows.

Note to Facilitator: This discussion should help participants see that Michael the farmer's experience includes both profound trauma (isolation, danger, destruction) AND tentative regrowth (nature recovering, the choice to stay). It's important to acknowledge the weight of loss before moving into questions about healing.

I. UNPACKING WHAT WE SAW

Begin here to ensure everyone is grounded in the story before moving to deeper reflection.

- ? **Who** did we just meet? What can we say about them — their life, their family, their values?
- ? **Where** do you see the war's impact — on the land, on the community, or on Michael and Paz themselves?
- ? **What** is beginning to return? What signs of healing and regrowth do you notice?
- ? **Why** did they choose to stay? What do you think gave them the strength to persevere?

2. PERSONAL REFLECTION

- ? What do you think about Michael and Paz's decision to stay? What would you have done?

Michael says, "Nature has its own powers and life slowly returns."

- ? What do you think that symbolizes for him?

Michael says, "Our roots here are deep. People here are ready to die, to sacrifice their lives, and to continue to work the land."

- ? What does working the land mean to him? What are the roots he's referring to?

Note to Facilitator: Help participants see that **"roots"** operates on multiple levels here: the personal (home, community, livelihood), an ancient covenant (between a people and its land), and the ideological (holding the line, protecting the border, defending a future here).

- ? Where in your own life do you have deep roots — places, people, values you would stay and protect and nurture, even when it's hard?
- ? What, in your view, sustains Michael and Paz's hope and enables them to keep going?

Note to Facilitator: Highlight the idea of roots as something that enables people to hold onto hope, to meaning, or to a guiding value. Roots can be understood not only in a literal sense, but also as values, beliefs, or sources of strength.



Pre-Screening

→ Introduce the video and provide brief context:

This next clip is taken from Beit Avi Chai's filmed podcast *האור בקצה* – The Light at the Edge, hosted by journalist Roni Kuban. In each episode, Kuban meets with Israeli figures for an open conversation about pain and recovery, and the personal struggles that emerged in the wake of October 7. In this episode, he meets 80-year-old Gadi Moses from Kibbutz Nir Oz, who was held hostage for 482 days. His wife Efrat was murdered on October 7 — alongside 46 others from their kibbutz — and her body was buried in a temporary plot until it would finally be possible to return to Nir Oz and lay her to rest in their home community.

 Invite participants to open Google Maps and locate Kibbutz Nir Oz

Screen the video

Post-Screening Discussion

? What struck you most in what Gadi said?

? In the face of such unimaginable struggle, what were the choices that Gadi made?

Gadi's first statement upon his release was: "I am fully committed to the restoration of Nir Oz. I am going back to the potatoes [to plant them]."

? What do you think the rehabilitation of the land and community means to him?

Note to Facilitator: When asked what made him talk about potatoes in that moment, this was Gadi's answer – as you read out the following quote, you can ask participants to jot down any words that stand out or resonate with them:

"I don't know if I can convey what a farmer feels. [...] When you sow and wait for a crop for 4-5 months, you have to be optimistic. You have to hope. You have to believe. You have to have an intimate relationship with this soil because you expect it to give you something. You have to believe. You have to hope. You have to learn. You have to find every way to overcome [the many challenges]."

? What words stood out to you? Why?

? What, in your view, keeps Gadi's hope alive and enables him to keep going?

Connecting the Dots

- ? In what ways does this connect with the image of ecological succession we looked at earlier? In what ways does it feel different?
- ? Looking at the words we wrote on the board at the start of the session — which stand out to you now, after watching Michael's and Gadi's stories? Why?

PART III › AND YET THE WHEAT GROWS ONCE MORE: TEXT STUDY

Chevruta Study

We now turn to a beloved and widely quoted song, performed by Chava Alberstein, one of Israel's most famous singers. "The Wheat Grows Once More", written in 1973 in the wake of the Yom Kippur war, touches on the painful dissonance of life continuing in the wake of great loss. [To read more about the poem and hear it set to music, go to the Zikaron Project]

Note to facilitator: In Appendix C we offer two more texts: The first is Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, one of the oldest meditations on the 'seasons' in a person's life. The second is a poem by Yehuda Amichai, one of Israel's most celebrated poets, written in direct argument with Ecclesiastes. Depending on the time available and the nature of your group, choose whether to bring all texts or only "The Wheat Grows Once More".

THE WHEAT GROWS ONCE MORE

DORIT TZAMERET

Fields spill out into the distance, until the edge of the horizon
And carobs, and olives, and the Gilboa –
And the valley is engulfed by the evening
With beauty that exceeds all that came before.

**This is not the same valley, this is not the same home,
You are all gone, and can never return,
The path with the boulevard, and in the sky – an eagle,
And the wheat grows once more.**

From beneath the bitter ashes, the asphodels bloom
And on the grass, a boy and his dog
The well-lit room is bathed in light as nights fall
Over that which lies inside, and within his heart

This is not the same valley..

And everything that was, shall perhaps forever be
The sun has risen, again the sun returns
Still the songs are sung but how can they speak
Of all the pain and all the love

**Yes, this is the same valley,
Yes, this is the same home
But you – yes, you can never return
And did it happen, and how did it happen, and how can it still be,
That the wheat grows once more?**

→ Split participants into pairs and distribute the text study sheet (Appendix C). Invite them to first read the texts quietly, circling words or lines that resonate with them, then read the texts together and discuss the following questions:

The poem says: "It is not the same valley, it is not the same home," and then says, "Indeed this is the same valley, indeed this is the same home."

- ? How can both be true at once? Where did you see this duality in Michael's and Gadi's stories? Have you ever felt that way?

Michael says, "It was a burnt landscape... Nature has its own powers, and life slowly returns in the north."

- ? Where does the poem echo this? What feelings surface for you when presented with those images?

Note to facilitator: Point out the many images of life, nature, and the passage of time that appear throughout the poem – the animals, the sun, the fields.

- ? How does one hold loss and life at the same time — and what makes that possible?
→ Allow 10–20 minutes [depending on the number of texts] for pairs to read and discuss, then bring the group back together and invite them to share thoughts and questions that came up.

PART IV › SUMMARY

We close by returning to the questions at the heart of this lesson, and inviting participants to reflect on where they've arrived.

Note to Facilitator: Share the following reflection aloud before moving on to the activity. It is meant to gather the threads of the session, giving participants a frame to carry into the personal work that follows.

Closing Reflection

→ Share the following with participants:

The Hebrew word for healing — רפוי (ripui) — comes from two different roots, and carries two different meanings. The first refers to active intervention – curing an illness or healing an injury (לרפא). The second refers to the act of letting go – releasing tension, loosening one's grip, allowing rest (להרפות).

- ? This linguistic duality invites us to consider: What does healing require? Is it about actively fixing what is broken, or about letting go, and letting time run its course?

We've seen both of these today. Michael chose to stay and keep working, tending his fields,

refusing to abandon them. And Gadi, who at the time was still waiting to bury his partner and unable to begin mourning, had already dedicated himself to bringing his community and his fields back to life.

Ecclesiastes tells us there is a time for everything. But we don't always get to wait for the right season — we have to grieve and hope, hold on and let go, sometimes all at once. That word — *ripui* — holds both truths together.

We feel that duality in the tension of loss and life at the center of the poem, which ends not with an answer but with a question asked three times: "And how has it happened, and how has it happened, and how does it happen still, that the wheat grows once more?" She doesn't know how. She only knows that it does.


Gadi's and Michael's stories perhaps offer a glimpse of an answer. They've both found something to commit to — a piece of land, a community, a future — and that commitment is what keeps them going.

Closing Activity:

→ Give each participant a piece of paper.

Today we explored the duality of trauma and healing — through the image of secondary succession, through Michael's story of staying and tending his land, and through Gadi's determination to return to planting potatoes, even now.


Take a moment to look back at everything we encountered today — the images, the stories, the texts. Choose one thought, image, or quote that stayed with you.

 Use it as a starting point: write freely — a poem, a few lines, whatever comes — or draw, where this thought touches your own life.

This is a personal exercise, for your eyes alone. You won't be asked to share unless you want to.

Note to Facilitator: Allow 5-7 minutes of quiet for this activity. Soft background music can help.

Final round: Takeaway





 Invite the participants to each share one thought they are taking away from this session. Close the session from there, without reopening the discussion.

APPENDIX A ›

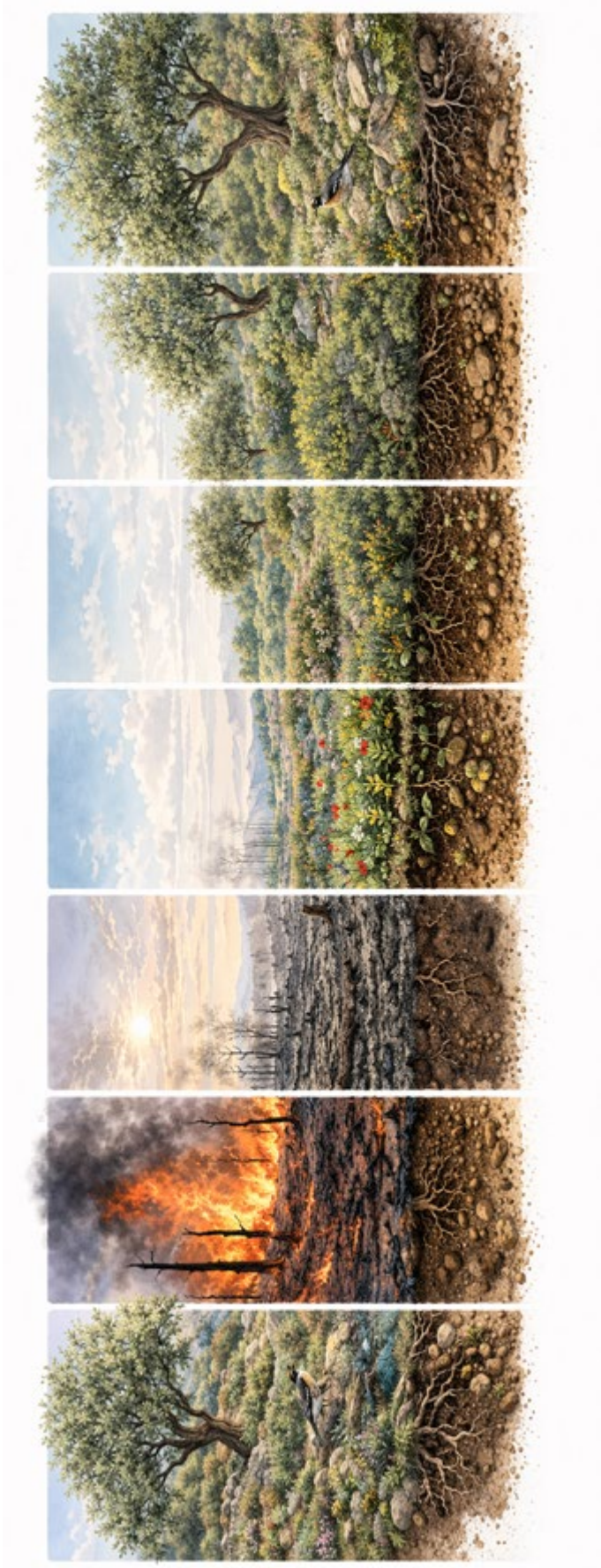
FACILITATOR'S EXTRA NOTES

Key Themes to Draw Out

Throughout the session, help participants notice and explore the following themes:

-  Trauma and regrowth coexist. Grief and growth do not take turns, and regrowth doesn't erase what was lost. The farmer's fields are recovering, but the trauma of the war is still present; the hostage plans to rehabilitate his potato fields while he waits to bury his wife. We hold both grief and hope at the same time, the dissonance of simultaneous realities. The wheat grows while the mourning is still unfinished — this is what healing looks like. The goal of this session is not to resolve that dissonance, but to help participants name it, sit with it, and recognize it as part of being human in an impossible moment.
-  What sustains hope? At the heart of this session is the question: What allows a person to keep going in the face of unthinkable loss? For Michael and Gadi, meaning has become rooted in the land they work, the community they are part of, and the future they choose to believe in. As you facilitate, listen for what participants identify as the source of each man's strength, and help them begin to locate that question in their own lives: What do I hold onto? What keeps me going?
-  Nature as teacher. Nature has its own timeline and its own power. Some things heal on their own; some things need our active care. The metaphor of burnt fields sprouting green can apply to our internal landscapes, too. Just as a forest after a fire doesn't start from zero, people who have been through hard experiences don't either.
-  The two meanings of **רפוי** (ripui): healing. Active healing requires work, intention, and sometimes outside help. Releasing and letting go requires trust and patience. Most real healing probably requires both.

**APPENDIX B ›
ABOUT SECONDARY
SUCCESSION**



→ This image represents the stages of secondary succession, which happens when a fire, flood, or other destruction occurs, but the soil, seeds, and roots remain intact below the surface, enabling the ecosystem to recover. Life doesn't start from scratch, but uses its hidden resources to recover and rebuild.

→ The following describes the seven stages roughly depicted in the image, in the context of a forest ecosystem (the stages will vary according to the type of ecosystem):

- 1.** A thriving forest ecosystem — trees, plants, and animals living in stable balance.
- 2.** A fire breaks out, burning through and destroying everything visible above ground.
- 3.** What's left looks barren. But the soil is still there — and beneath it, so are the seeds and roots.
- 4.** The first signs of life return: grasses and small plants push up through the ash.
- 5.** Shrubs appear, then young trees — slowly, the landscape begins to fill in.
- 6.** Faster-growing trees shoot up, followed by the slower-growing ones beneath them.
- 7.** Over time, the taller, stronger trees take over — a thriving forest ecosystem again, similar to where it began, but not identical to it.

APPENDIX C › TEXT STUDY

Translation taken from [here](#)

THE WHEAT GROWS ONCE MORE // DORIT TZAMERET

Fields spill out into the distance, until the edge of the horizon
And carobs, and olives, and the Gilboa –
And the valley is engulfed by the evening
With beauty that exceeds all that came before.

**This is not the same valley, this is not the same home,
You are all gone, and can never return,
The path with the boulevard, and in the sky – an eagle,
And the wheat grows once more.**

From beneath the bitter ashes, the asphodels bloom
And on the grass, a boy and his dog
The well-lit room is bathed in light as nights fall
Over that which lies inside, and within his heart.

This is not the same valley...

And everything that was, shall perhaps forever be
The sun has risen, again the sun returns
Still the songs are sung but how can they speak
Of all the pain and all the love.

**Yes, this is the same valley,
Yes, this is the same home
But you – yes, you can never return
And did it happen, and how did it happen, and how can it still be,
That the wheat grows once more?**

* For a richer text study, offer the following texts together, along with the questions below:

A MAN IN HIS LIFE YEHUDA AMICHAI

A man doesn't have time in his life
to have time for everything.
He doesn't have seasons enough to have
a season for every purpose. Ecclesiastes
was wrong about that.

A man needs to love and to hate/
at the same moment,
to laugh and cry with the same eyes,
with the same hands to throw/
stones and to gather them,
to make love in war and war in love.
And to hate and forgive and remember and forget,
to arrange and confuse, to eat and to digest
what history
takes years and years to do. [...]

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TURN, TURN, TURN THE BYRDS / ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8

To everything, turn, turn, turn
There is a season, turn, turn, turn
And a time to every purpose under heaven
A time to be born, a time to die
A time to plant, a time to reap
[...] A time to build up, a time to break down
A time to dance, a time to mourn
A time to cast away stones
A time to gather stones together [...]

ECCLESIASTES 3:1 – 8

- (1) To everything there is a season A time for every purpose under heaven:
- (2) A time to be born, And a time to die; ... A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted;
- (3) A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up;
- (4) A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance;
- (5) A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace
And a time to refrain from embracing;
- (6) A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away;
- (7) A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak;
- (8) A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace.

Questions for Discussion after textual study

The poem says: "It is not the same valley, it is not the same home" — and then says "Indeed this is the same valley, indeed this is the same home."

- How can both be true at once? Where did you see this duality in Michael's and Gadi's stories? Have you ever felt that way?
- What does Ecclesiastes say about the 'seasons' in our lives, and why does Amichai disagree? Which resonates with you more?

Amichai says we have to "laugh and cry with the same eyes", to "hate and forgive and remember and forget".

- Where did you see this in the videos we watched? How does one hold that dissonance — and what makes it possible?

Taking the Discussion Further

Read out the following quotes from Michael and Gadi. Which philosophy does each echo: Ecclesiastes or Amichai?

"It was a burnt landscape. Nature has its own powers and life slowly returns." Michael

"If we leave here it will be very difficult to return, to rebuild, for there to be continuity." Michael

"People are willing to die, to give their lives, and continue to work the land." Michael

"[Since you returned, have you had any chance to start mourning your wife?] No, I guess that will happen on the 30th, they're moving her from her temporary grave to Nir Oz. That's when I'll start mourning." Gadi

"I am going back to the potatoes [to plant them]". Gadi

"When you sow and wait for a crop for 4-5 months, you have to be optimistic. You have to hope. You have to believe." Gadi

Both men are living through both philosophies at once – waiting for nature and time to run their course, and actively choosing to stay, work the land, and rebuild. Which feels harder to you, and why? What do you think keeps them going through everything?