

# YOUTH ACTIVITY

## Love plants for tomorrow.

“A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they shall never sit.”

+ Greek Proverb

The Jewish Talmud includes a beautiful story about Choni the Circle Maker. One day, Choni was walking along his path, when he saw a man planting a carob tree. Curious, Choni asked the man, “This tree, how long will it take for it to bear fruit?” And the man responded dutifully and honestly, “70 years.” Choni was appalled. 70 years? That’s a really long time for a tree to grow. Why would anyone plant a tree that wasn’t even going to bear fruit in their lifetime? When Choni asked the planter this question, the man simply responded, “My grandparents planted a carob tree so that I would be able to reap its fruit. Now I shall do the same for my grandchildren.”

**One of the ways we love others is to take responsibility for the future by actions we take in the present.**

Many of the projects supported by Week of Compassion focus on stewardship of God’s resources. When you share in the offering, you are helping to support development programs that empower communities around the world to thrive. You are helping to create opportunities that will change the lives of people around the world who you may never meet.





Week of Compassion

**ACTION/IDEA:** Host a tree planting ceremony at your church, local park, or other appropriate site. While there, tell the story of future generations who will benefit from the tree and what it offers.

## PRAYER

*For this tree that we plant this day, we pray, O God, that it will be a blessing to those who will find shelter under its shade or enjoy fruit from its branches. While we may not see it come into its fullness in our generation, we have faith and hope that it will bless generations to come. Amen.*

Three generations ago, a man planted orchards in the fertile valley of the Jordan River. He built a small house beside the rows of trees, with a patio shaded by grapevines.

That grandson—whom we'll call Ali—is now, himself, late into middle age. The house and the patio are still there, but the grapevines have long since withered and the citrus groves are turning brown and brittle. What was once a lush valley is becoming unforgivably dry. A changing climate has resulted in less rainfall in the region. High demand for water upstream has reduced the volume of water in the Jordan River, and diversion of streams and runoff for use in Israeli settlements has made irrigation difficult in this part of the Palestinian territories.

As Ali tells about the death of his citrus trees, his voice cracks, yet in his eyes, there is resolve, there is even hope. He shows us the rows of date palms he has recently planted because they do not require as much water as the citrus. They will not bear fruit for several years and will take decades to grow to their full height. He has not planted them for himself, Ali tells us, but for his children and his grandchildren.

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Program—a Week of Compassion partner in Israel/Palestine—is working with Ali to protect his access to the water he needs for his farm, for his grandfather's legacy and the inheritance of future generations.