



IN YOUR HOME

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Tu B'Shevat • "

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Shalom Parents,

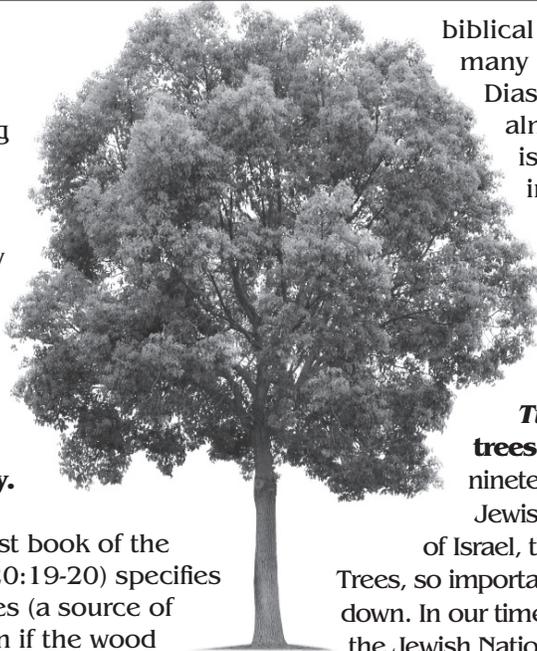
Tu B'Shevat is a minor Jewish holiday, often called the New Year for trees. It comes at the beginning of spring in Israel, on the 15th of the Hebrew month of *Shevat*, six weeks after *Hanukkah*. This is usually during January or February when the trees in Israel blossom after a rainy winter, while there's often snow on the ground in some parts of America.

Jews have had a special regard for trees throughout our history.

The *Torah* has many references to trees, starting with Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In addition, Deuteronomy (20:19-20) specifies that even during wartime, fruit trees (a source of food), are not to be cut down, even if the wood is needed to build war machinery.

***Tu B'Shevat* is different from other Jewish holidays.** It has no prescribed religious rituals and is not mentioned in the *Torah*. The *Talmud* mentions a *Tu B'Shevat* custom of planting a young cedar on the birth of a boy and a young cypress when a girl was born. When the children grew up and married, branches from the two trees were cut and woven together to make their *chuppah* (Jewish wedding canopy).

Throughout many centuries in the Diaspora, Jews celebrated *Tu B'Shevat* by eating fruits grown in the Land of Israel. The Land of Israel is described in the *Torah* (Deuteronomy 8:7-10) as "A land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and (date) honey." These seven species were staple foods of



biblical Jews in the Land of Israel. For many subsequent centuries, Jews in the Diaspora made great efforts to put almonds (because the almond tree is the first to blossom after winter in Israel), raisins, figs, dates and carob on the table. The poor in many communities received *maot payrote* (money for fruit) so they too could taste fruit grown in the Land of Israel.

***Tu B'Shevat* is a time for planting trees in Israel.**

At the end of the nineteenth century, when the first modern Jewish settlers returned to rebuild the Land of Israel, they found rocky and difficult soil.

Trees, so important for soil conservation, had been cut down. In our time, on *Tu B'Shevat*, money donated to the Jewish National Fund helps plant trees in Israel, as it has done for more than one hundred years.

Children and young adults plant saplings throughout Israel. It is customary to eat a new fruit on this day; especially figs, dates, raisins, carob and almonds.

Many people celebrate *Tu B'Shevat* today

by planting saplings, working in a garden, eating special Israeli fruit, or doing something else to show appreciation for trees and the earth. Many also participate in a service much like the Passover *seder*. For this holiday's *seder*, however, fruits, nuts, and wine or grape juice are the most important foods on the menu. Whatever way is chosen, young children love being involved in planning and celebrating it.

The holiday this year starts on the evening of January 25 and continues on January 26.

HAVING FUN AT HOME AND IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

You and your family can be creative and have fun celebrating *Tu B'Shevat*

DECORATING YOUR HOME

With your child: Gather green plants together and use them to decorate the *seder* table. Alternatively, place small green branches in a vase, creating a table centerpiece. Invite your child to draw pictures of trees, Israeli flags and fruits that grow in Israel (oranges, dates, figs, pomegranates, strawberries and watermelons) and use them as place cards for family members and guests.



Israel and North America, and the fact that it is possible to plant outdoors at this time of the year in Israel. At a later time, weather permitting, transfer the plants outdoors.



TAKING CARE OF TREES

With your child: "Adopt" a tree in your yard or neighborhood. Make sure it has sufficient water and seems healthy. You can use recycled water in which you've cooked vegetables. Let the water cool first. Do not reuse water that contains oil, butter or meat. Watch the tree for changes.

CREATING A MENU WITH ISRAELI PRODUCTS

With your child: Plan a menu that includes festive foods from Israel; such as Israeli wine, cheese, crackers, cookies, pickles, olives, dates, figs, oranges, persimmons, pomegranates, tomatoes, peppers, almonds, carob and flowers. These items can often be purchased at health food stores and many supermarkets, in addition to kosher butcher shops. Of course, be sure to include foods (Israeli and domestic) that your children love to eat.

TASTING NEW FRUITS

With your child: Taste a new fruit and say the blessing on fruit:

Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nay, E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech ha-o-lam bo-rei pri ha-etz.

(Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.)

If tasting a fruit for the first time in its season, recite the *Shehecheyanu* blessing before eating it:

Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech ha-o-lam she-he-che-ya-nu ve-ki-yi-ma-nu ve-hi-gi-a-nu laz-man ha-zeh.

(Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.)

PLANTING A GARDEN

With your child: On *Tu B'Shevat*, start a garden indoors, by planting seeds in a flower pot or box. Discuss the difference between the climate in

REUSING, RECYCLING, REDUCING WASTE

This holiday helps us focus on our responsibilities to preserve and care for our planet. Find ideas for reducing junk mail on www.ProQuo.com and to learn about ways to recycle on www.kids.niehs.nih.gov/recycle.htm, <http://www.kidsforsavingearth.org> and <http://www.container-recycling.org/kids.htm>.



With your child: Discuss ways to reuse, recycle and reduce waste. Ask for and make a list of his ideas.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

- You can arrange for a tree to be planted in Israel in honor or memory of a loved one (at \$18 per tree or \$36 for a ring of three trees). Contact the Jewish National Fund's Online Tree Planting Center (www.jnftrees.com) or phone 1-800-542-8733.
- On *Tu B'Shevat*, which is designated "Nature Festival" in Israel, more than one million Israelis take part in Jewish National Fund tree planting activities.

A TUB'SHEVAT SEDER

Many people love to participate in a *Tu B'Shevat seder* because it is a fun and meaningful way to observe the day. Modeled after the Passover *seder*, it was first composed in the 16th Century in the Northern Israeli city of Safed, by Rabbi Isaac Luria and his students. They were Kabbalists (mystical Jews who originated in Spain) who invigorated the *Tu B'Shevat* observance by creating a special *seder* as a festive way to celebrate the holiday.



While the *Tu B'Shevat seder* follows an order (like the Passover *seder*), creativity and choice are appropriate, so feel free to follow your inspirational whims.



Let's start

Seder participants drink four cups of wine and eat nuts and special fruits. Many people eat the seven types of produce for which the *Torah* praises the Land of Israel.



Where is a good place for the seder?

Set your kitchen or dining room table with a special cloth decorated with flowers or plants or greens. Weather permitting, feel free to conduct the *seder* outside in a wooded, flowery area; an environment conducive to such a celebration.



When is a good time to celebrate the seder?

It can be held at any time of the day on *Tu B'Shevat*, (lunch, dinner, breakfast or snack).



What do we do?

1. Each *seder* participant receives:
 - a) four glasses of wine or grape juice (either white and red wine or white and purple grape juice):
 - The first cup is white (a symbol of the dormant plant world during winter).
 - The second cup is mostly white, mixed with some red (some people substitute blush).
 - The third cup is mostly red, mixed with some white (Some people substitute rosé)
 - The fourth cup is red (symbolizing the sun's warmth as plants bloom in the spring).



Let's eat!

Be sure to include foods (Israeli and domestically produced) that you and your children love to eat! Have fun with each other and enjoy the meal.



Let's sing

- b) fruits (from Israel if possible), in each of four categories:
 - with an outer shell or peel that cannot

be eaten (nuts, bananas)

- with pits or seeds inside (apples, olives, peaches, pears, plums, prunes, dates)
- with pits or seeds inside and an outer shell or peel that cannot be eaten (oranges, tangerines, grapefruit, pomegranates).
- completely edible (raisins, figs, strawberries, carob).

c) a *Haggadah* (see the *Tu B'Shevat seder* guides by clicking on sites listed below:)

http://www.lookstein.org/resources/seder_derovan.pdf

http://www.lookstein.org/resources/seder_babaganewz.pdf

http://judaism.about.com/od/tubshvat/a/tushvat_seder.htm

2. Include each of the "seven species" mentioned in the *Torah*; for example, mushroom barley soup (symbolizing barley), whole wheat bread (symbolizing wheat), salads with olives and/or olive oil dressing, honey cake, fruit salad (including figs, dates, grapes and pomegranate juice). Whole pomegranates can be used as a table centerpiece too.

3. Discuss four questions on environmental topics. What questions are important to you? Here are some examples:

- What should we do with paper we want to get rid of?
- Why should we try to save water?
- What can we do to save water at home?
- How can we take care of the trees, bushes and flowers in our yard and house?

Children's songs for *Tu B'Shevat* can be found on www.carolboydleon.com\tub'shevat.

A RECOMMENDED SELECTION OF BOOKS

2-3 YEAR OLDS

It's Tu B'Shevat by E.S., Zolkower, Kar-Ben Publishing, 2005. With rhyme and colorful illustrations, this board book tells about a boy and his family who plant a tree in honor of *Tu B'Shevat*.

Dear Tree by D.Weber, Hachai, 2012. On *Tu B'Shevat*, a little boy shares his hopes and wishes for trees; and especially for the one under which he plays.

4-7 YEAR OLDS

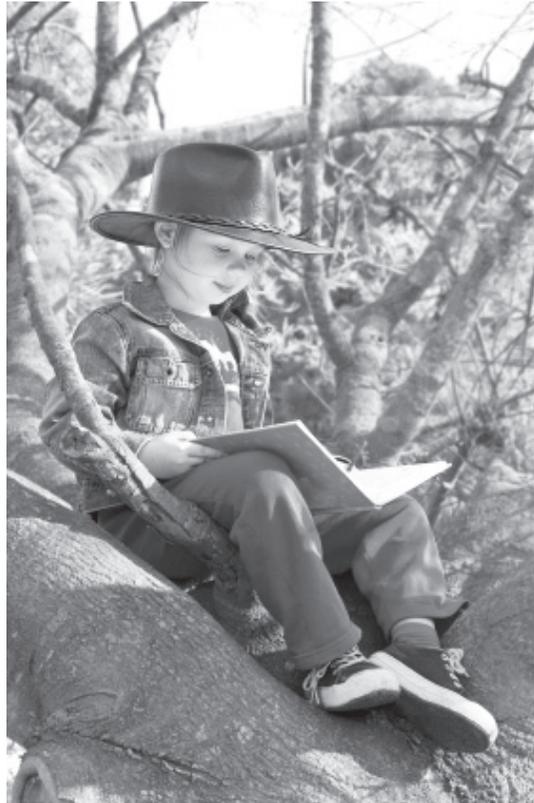
Grandpa and Me on Tu B'Shevat by M.E.Gold-Vukson, Kar-Ben Publishing, 2004. A special relationship between generations is presented as a boy and his grandfather plant a seed that will much later grow into a tree.

A Tree Is Nice by J. Udry, Harper Collins Publishers, 1956. Why is a tree nice? A variety of ways in which people use trees and an explanation of some of the reasons trees are so important to us are presented.

Pearl Plants A Tree by J.B. Zalben, Simon & Schuster, 1995. In this sweet story, Pearl is inspired to plant an apple seed after her grandfather shows her one he planted years before. They plant the little tree together and imagine it grown in future years.

The Apple Tree's Discovery by P. Schram, Kar-Ben Publishing, 2012. A little apple tree in a forest of oaks begs God for stars like those glimmering on the branches of the great trees beside her. As the seasons pass, she learns to appreciate her own gifts and realizes that it's possible to find a star in each of us.

The Littlest Tree by S. Rouss, Pitspopany Press, 2005. The smallest tree in the forest, wishing to be put to good use, triumphs as the villagers search for wood to use in building their new synagogue.



Sammy Spider's First Tu B'Shevat, by S.A. Rouss, Kar-Ben Publishing, 2000. Sammy watches as the seasons pass and trees blossom, bear fruit and shed their leaves. When *Tu B'Shevat* arrives, his spinning skills provide a gift for his favorite tree.

9-12 YEAR OLDS

Listen To The Trees: Jews and The Earth by M. Cone, URJ Press, 1995. With charming illustrations and environmental wisdom, this book looks to the *Torah* for inspiration, quotations, sayings and stories.

ALL AGES

A Seder For Tu B'Shevat by H.W. Appelman, Kar-Ben Copies, Inc., 1984. This guide, adaptable in many different settings, includes songs, blessings, stories, crafts, games and food suggestions for family members of all ages.

Branching Out: Your Tu B'Shevat Haggadah, Jewish National Fund, 2002. This guide for the *Tu B'Shevat Seder* includes games, songs, discussion topics, riddles and blessings for adults and children of all ages. It is available through the Jewish National Fund (www.jnf.org or education@jnf.org or phone 212.870.9300).

The Lorax by Dr Seuss, Random House, 1992. With the use of colorful illustrations, word plays and rhymes, Dr. Seuss, speaking through his character the Lorax, warns against mindless progress and the danger it poses to the earth's natural beauty.

DVD

Shalom Sesame: Grover Plants a Tree: Tu B'Shevat. Part of the "Shalom Sesame DVDs" series, Grover, Brosh and Avigail get back to nature as they learn how to plant trees and make the world a better place. Color; Approximate running time 27 min. Appropriate for ages 4-8.

