

TU B'SHEVAT - FB LIVE

## TU B'SHEVAT – The 15th of Shevat

Thanking God for the Trees and their Fruit and for Restoration and Redemption of Israel

*Tu B'Shevat* is known as the New Year of the trees. It is not listed, as such, among the Biblical Feast Days but is in accord with the Scripture, "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed, which comes from the field **year by year**" (Deuteronomy 14:22). As this is the time the sap rises in trees to nourish new life and cause the buds of new fruit to develop, this day was allocated in Israel by the sages as the New Year for trees, that is, it serves to determine which fruit needs to be tithed for any particular year.

The holiday was almost forgotten during the long years of the exile from Israel but is being remembered and celebrated now that the Land is restored and again is filled with trees and an abundance of beautiful fruit!

Another reason to give thanks is that it is a herald of Spring! At this season in the Land of Israel, the majority of the winter rain has fallen and the sap has risen in the trees. The fruit trees, which stood bare through the cold winter months, begin to sprout green leaves and buds in the month of Shevat as they bear the promise of the harvest. And we know that soon we will be able to happily respond to the proclamation of the Beloved, as described in the Song of Songs, chapter 2:

"Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance."

THE THREE CENTRAL THEMES OF *Tu B'Shevat* are:

- (a) giving thanks and praise to God for His creation of the trees and fruit, with a special focus on those grown in Israel.
- (b) recalling our beginning in the Garden of Eden, with the Tree of Life in the center, and the relationship we enjoyed there with our Father, and
- (c) creating greater awareness of our task of restoring the 'Garden' and of how we can actively participate in caring for our environment, both physically and spiritually.

These themes can be explored and expressed in a *Tu B'Shevat seder*/meal.

We will post a link here on the HIS-ISRAEL FB page or you can find it on the website under the Festivals heading.

CELEBRATE A TU B'SHEVAT SEDER - Find on the website under Festivals!

The celebration of a *Tu B'Shevat seder* meal can be as large and ornate or as small and simple as you wish. Just to give you an idea. The ideal ingredients are as follows:

- A collection of fruit and nuts, fresh and/or dried of the seven species, i.e. figs, dates, olives, grapes, pomegranates. (Deut. 8:7 -10)
- Wheat and barley can be added in the form of bread (*Shabbat challah* can be used), cake, cookies or cereal.
- Various nuts, some with the shells (pistachios are easiest).
- Fruit with peels (e.g. **pomegranates**, bananas, oranges, avocados); fruit with edible seeds (e.g. blueberries, strawberries, **grapes**), fruit with inedible pits (e.g. apricots, peaches, plums, **dates**)
- Wine or grape juice, white and red if possible.

## PLANT AND SING!

The importance of song in the praise of God is emphasized at *Tu B'Shevat*.

**Shabbat Shirah (Sabbath of Song)** occurs around the time of *Tu B'Shevat*. The Torah portion *BeShallah* is read, which contains the mighty *Shirat haYam*, the Song at the Sea. I will sing unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously! (Exodus 15:1-18).

This Shabbat falls in the middle of winter and it is customary to put out extra breadcrumbs or birdseed to feed the birds on this day. The eye of the Great King is also on the sparrow, and we can be His open hand in feeding them at a time when finding food is difficult. The song of the birds is lifted to the heavens in constant praise to their Creator, and they remind us to do the same.

\* Take a listen to Shlomo Katz's *Niggun of the Birds* on the website under Music to My Ears!

**Plant Something!** You can plant a tree in Israel via JNF the [Jewish National Fund](#). And/or, tend to the trees in your yard and maybe plant something new. Otherwise, plant something indoors. This is an interesting project for children as it instills an awareness of the natural growth cycle. Different seeds can be planted, for example parsley, which can then be 'harvested' for use at the Passover Seder.

I'd like to end with a blessing from the beautiful Psalm 128 - Psalm of Ascent (120 - 134)

Blessed (*Ashrei*) is everyone who fears the LORD,  
who walks in his ways!

You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;  
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.

May the Lord bless you from Zion.

May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.

May you see your children's children.

*Shalom al Yisrael!* Peace be upon Israel.