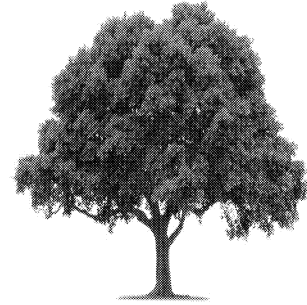


ט'ו בִּשְׁבָט Tu BiSh'vat

How can we celebrate nature and Israel in the cold of winter?

In Israel, another new year will soon be celebrated. Tu BiSh'vat, the "New Year of the Trees," is observed on the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of Sh'vat.



Tu BiSh'vat is not mentioned in the Torah. According to scholars, the holiday was originally an agricultural festival, corresponding to the beginning of spring in Israel. As in the case with many Jewish observances, a critical historical event served as a catalyst. After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. and the exile that followed, many Jews felt a need to bind themselves symbolically to their former homeland. Tu BiSh'vat served in part to fill that spiritual need. As it was no longer possible to bring tithes to the Temple, Jews used this time each year to eat a variety of fruits and nuts that could be obtained from Palestine. The practice, a sort of physical association with the land, continued for many centuries.

The sixteenth and seventeenth century kabbalists (mystics) of Palestine elaborated on the exilic customs, creating a ritual for Tu BiSh'vat somewhat similar to the Passover seder. On Erev Tu BiSh'vat, they would gather in their homes for a fifteen-course meal, each course being one of the foods associated with the land. Between courses, they would read from an anthology called P'ri Eitz Hadar (Citrus Fruit), a compilation of passages on trees drawn from the Bible, the Talmud, and the mystical Zohar.

Today in modern Israel, Tu BiSh'vat has become a national holiday, a tree planting festival for both Israelis and Jews throughout the world. Much of the credit for the great joy and spirit of the holiday is a direct result of the important work of the Jewish National Fund.* Tu BiSh'vat may be observed in a variety of ways.

- Tu BiSh'vat seders are not just for mystics! Host a seder and celebrate the many wonderful fruits and nuts of Israel. Many recipes include these foods. [Entree to Judaism for Families: Jewish Cooking and Kitchen Conversations with Children](#) by Tina Wasserman includes many recipes for families to enjoy cooking together.

- While the food is cooking, keep busy by making a Tu BiSh'vat Handprint Tree or other fun family activities.

<http://www.reformjudaism.org/tu-bishvat-customs-and-rituals>

Do a Mitzvah!



Plant a Tree in Israel

Over the past 113 years, JNF has evolved into a global environmental leader by planting more than 250 million trees, building over 240 reservoirs and dams, developing over 250,000 acres of land, creating more than 2,000 parks, providing the infrastructure for over 1,000 communities, and connecting thousands of children and young adults to Israel and their heritage.

<http://www.jnf.org/about-jnf/>

Send this beautiful personalized tree certificate to your family, friends, or loved ones, to show your expression of sympathy or in recognition of a special occasion.

<http://www.jnf.org>



Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
Protecting Creation, Generation to Generation

Protect the Environment - The Jewish Way

The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) deepens and broadens the Jewish community's commitment to stewardship and protection of the Earth through outreach, activism and Jewish learning.

Through a network of Jewish leaders, institutions and individuals, COEJL is mobilizing the Jewish community to conserve energy, increase sustainability, and advocate for policies that increase energy efficiency and security while building core Jewish environmental knowledge and serving as a Jewish voice in the broader interfaith community.

<http://www.coejl.org>

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The Israel Museum is among the largest encyclopedic museums in the world, and one of the most breathtaking places in Israel to visit. One of Judaica Webstore's consistently most popular categories is the Israel Museum series of official products. Hundreds of items - replicas, adaptations, and art prints of pieces on display at the museum, as well as gorgeous sterling silver jewelry based on archaeological discoveries. Check it out - you won't be disappointed!

<http://www.judaicawebstore.com/the-israel-museum-C13.aspx>

Eat Israeli Food - Especially the 7 Spieces of the Land of Israel

For Adonai your God is bringing you to a good land a land with flowing streams, springs and fountains issuing from the hills and plains a land of **wheat** and **barley** of **grape vines** and **figs** and **pomegranates** a land of **olive oil** and **date honey**.

Deuteronomy 8

Be creative with these ingredients!

