

January 13, 2022  
Rabbi Wexler - *Beshalah*

There is a lot happening this upcoming weekend! On Sunday and Monday, we will gather in-person and virtually for our Community Mitzvah Days (more on that in a bit). Meanwhile, this Shabbat we will read parashat *Beshalah* which contains the famous story of the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, and then on Sunday night and Monday we will celebrate the holiday of Tu B'Shevat. Oh, and by the way, in between, the Eagles will most certainly win their playoff game against Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers!

But while the Eagles prepare for their game, let's ask ourselves: is there a connection between Tu B'Shevat and this week's Torah portion? In his book *Ziv HaMinhagim*, Rabbi Yehuda Dov Singer suggests a powerful link. Tu B'Shevat is the new year of the trees but look outside at the trees today. They are anything but in bloom! Is this the time to celebrate the new year for trees? There is nary a leaf in sight! Wouldn't it be more appropriate to celebrate Tu B'Shevat in the Spring?

Rabbi Singer's answer: right now, the trees LOOK dead. It may even be hard to imagine them filled with green leaves in the future. But also right now, the sap is beginning to run within them. This is the time of the year when sap is flowing within the trees. The leaves and the beauty of the fruits that the trees will produce in the spring and summer are all being prepared right now, in the dead of winter. The bare trees are symbolic of the idea that even when something looks awfully bleak, one should not give up on it. We should not give up on the trees in the dead of winter, and we should not give up on ourselves when things look bleak and uncertain.

But what is the connection to *Beshalah*? Well, after crossing the sea to freedom, the Israelites quickly find themselves without food and water. In Exodus 15:23 we read: "*They came to Marah and they could not drink the water, for it was bitter.*" The situation looked bleak, and the Israelites grew worried. Moses cried out to God and what did God do? "God showed him a tree and he threw it into the water and the water became sweet," (Exodus 15:25). A tree! Not a rock or dirt, but a tree. Why? Because the tree is the symbol that when all looks futile, bleak, and perhaps even hopeless, we are reminded that the situation can turn around. Rebirth happens! There can be renaissance and renewal. Throwing the tree into the water was meant as a message to the people: "Don't give up hope. Things may look bleak today, but tomorrow is a new day."

As we try to weather the wave of the Omicron variant, things look pretty bleak today, so I guess Tu B'Shevat comes at the perfect time; to remind us of the sap that runs within, to remind us to hold onto hope, and to remind us that tomorrow is a new day. And so, I hope you will join me along with members of our Sustainability Committee for our Virtual Tu B'Shevat Seder on Sunday at 11AM on Zoom.

Finally, remember that God provided the tree, but Moses needed to throw it into the water. He needed to take action. How appropriate that we will read these words from the Torah this Shabbat and then on Sunday and Monday we will take action and reach out our hands to help those in need through a myriad of projects, collections, and sessions that Naomi Mirowitz, Jeannie Teller, and our Social Action Committee have put together for our Community Mitzvah Days. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information and please join us!

As we reflect on the symbol of the tree and the sap within, and as we come together as community to take action and help others, may we each find the hope that lives in our hearts.

Shabbat Shalom and FLY EAGLES FLY!