



Halachah Guide: The Month of Shevat

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January 20: Shabbat Shirah

Shabbat Shirah is the Shabbat when we read Parshat Beshalach in shul; this parshah describes the splitting of Yam Suf and the miracle of the manna. There is a custom of leaving grain or bread for birds on Shabbat Shirah. Some suggest it is a reward for the birds' song of praise for Hashem at Yam Suf, while others link it to a midrash that birds thwarted Datan and Aviram by eating decoy manna they had scattered on Shabbat.

Some modify this custom, leaving the bread *before* Shabbat. This is because the sages forbid feeding wild animals on Shabbat, due to the strain involved. One may only feed animals which depend on us for food. However, other authorities maintain the custom of putting out bread on Shabbat Shirah itself. Among other arguments, they note that there really is no strain in this practice as we perform it. One may follow either view.

January 25: Tu b'Shevat, Shehechyanu and Israeli Produce

Tu b'Shevat is an important day in the tithing and *orlah* calendar of Israeli tree fruit. Therefore, we customarily eat tree fruit, and particularly fruit associated with Israel (grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, dates), on Tu b'Shevat.

Shehechyanu: When?

- In general, one who sees a seasonal, newly available fruit, and feels great joy at seeing it, recites the berachah of Shehechyanu. One whose personal joy is not that great should not recite Shehechyanu.
- Technically, one recites Shehechyanu even upon *seeing* newly available fruit. However, we generally recite Shehechyanu only upon eating; this is when most people feel the greatest joy.
- One who eats many types of new fruit at the same sitting should recite just one Shehechyanu.
- We recite Shehechyanu before reciting *borei pri ha'eitz*.

Shehechyanu: For which fruit?

- Fruit which is available via import all year still warrants a Shehechyanu when one eats local crops for the first time, if the local fruit is noticeably fresher or better than the year-round imports, inducing joy.
- Fruit which is available during two distinct times of the year, with at least one month of non-availability between them, warrants Shehechyanu when the fruit becomes available and its presence induces joy.
- We do not recite Shehechyanu on fruit produced via a prohibited cross-species graft (but one may eat the fruit).
- We do not recite Shehechyanu on underripe fruit, even if it is somewhat edible.
- We do recite Shehechyanu on cooked fruit.

Tithing Israeli produce

We certainly should support Israeli agriculture when it is available, as opposed to buying dates and figs from countries which oppose the existence of a Jewish state.

We need to tithe Israeli produce that arrives in stores in New York, separating terumah, maaser rishon, maaser sheni and maaser ani as appropriate, because we are not certain whether it was tithed in Israel. One who knows with certainty that the produce **has** been tithed should not do any tithing.

For instructions regarding separating tithes, here are some resources:

- Text: <https://oukosher.org/blog/consumer-kosher/separating-terumah-and-maaser/>
- Text: The Complete Artscroll Siddur, pg. 226
- Video: http://cor.ca/view/255/video_instructional_tithing_produce_from_the_land_of_israel.html

Spreading salt on icy walkways on Shabbat

In the event of ice, one should spread salt on walkways before Shabbat. However, in a case of need one may do so on Shabbat, taking care to use salt rather than sand, and to handle the salt in an unusual way.