

# TU B'SHEVAT



**YOUNG ISRAEL OF WEST HARTFORD  
DOR L'DOR: FAMILY LEARNING**

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*a service of the*



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WEST HARTFORD

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who dedicated their lives to  
Jewish education, by their  
family.*

# User Guide:

This packet is geared towards children from the ages of four until 6th grade to learn with their parents or other family member. On each page, there will be a source for all to learn. On many pages, the sources will be accompanied by guiding questions in different colored boxes, based on age group, to discuss. For the youngest age group, feel free to just focus on the questions. The left-most boxes are for children 4-6, the middle boxes for children 7-9, and the right-most boxes for children 10-12. These are merely suggestions but feel free to try out the other boxes as well. Please note that there are many possible answers to the questions, and the goal is not to reach one "right" answer.

In this packet, we will explore the holiday of Tu B'Shevat. We will learn about what Tu B'Shevat is and go through a mini Tu B'Shevat seder as we ask four questions on Tu B'Shevat and learn about each of the Seven Species of the land of Israel. Feel free to eat these fruits as you learn about them and to create your own Tu B'Shevat seder!

# What is Tu B'Shevat?

## Mishnah Rosh HaShanah 1:1

אַרְבַּעָה רֵאשֵׁי שָׁנִים הֵם. בְּאֶחָד בְּנִיסָן רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְמַלְכִים וְלִרְגָלִים. בְּאֶחָד בְּאֵלוּל רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְמַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֵמָה. רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר וְרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן אֹמְרִים, בְּאֶחָד בְּתִשְׂרֵי. בְּאֶחָד בְּתִשְׂרֵי רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְשָׁנִים וְלִשְׁמִטִּין וְלִזְבוּלוֹת, לְנִטְיָעָה וְלִירִקוֹת. בְּאֶחָד בְּשֶׁבֶט, רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְאֵילָן, כְּדַבְּרֵי בֵּית שְׁמַאי.

בֵּית הִלֵּל אֹמְרִים, בְּחֻמְשָׁה עֶשְׂרֵי בּוֹ

There are four new years. On the first of Nissan, the New Year for the kings and the festivals. On the first of Elul, the New Year for the tithing of animals. Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Shimon say this is on the first of Tishrei. On the first of Tishrei, [the count of] years, for the Sabbatical years and for the Jubilee years and for saplings and vegetables. On the first of Shevat, the New Year for the trees, according to Beit Shammai. Beit Hillel says on the fifteenth (Tu B'Shevat).

What are two things that trees give us?

Why are trees important?

Why do we celebrate a new year?

Why are birthdays special?

Why do you think it is important to celebrate the new year of the trees?

## Tu B'Shevat Facts

- Tu in Hebrew is טו which is 15, thus Tu B'Shevat is the 15th day of the Hebrew month Shevat
- Tu B'Shevat determines the new year for trees and therefore, relates to many laws surrounding agriculture. For example, there is a law that one cannot eat the fruit of a newly planted tree in its first three years (orlah). Tu B'Shevat determines the start of that year.
- There is a custom to eat fruits on Tu B'Shevat- some eat fruits grown in Israel, the Seven Species of Israel, or a variety of fruits.

# MAH NISHTANA

## The Four Questions of Tu B'Shevat

1

What is special about the New Year of the trees that we celebrate it over the other New Years mentioned in the Mishnah (aside from Rosh HaShanah)?



2

Why do we celebrate the New Year of the trees on the 15th of Shevat, in the winter?



3

Why do we eat fruit on this day?



4

What is special about the Seven Species of the Land of Israel—wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and date honey (Devarim 8:8)?





# Why Celebrate the New Year of Trees?

## Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov- The Book of Our Heritage

What is special about this New Year that it is celebrated while the others [mentioned in the Mishnah above in Section I, Part A.] (with the exception of the first of Tishrei, Rosh HaShanah) pass without any recognition?

The reason is that this New Year concerns itself with the praise of the Land of Israel, for it is on this day that the Land renews its vigor to give forth produce, to bear fruit, and to show its praiseworthiness – and the Land of Israel is praised for its fruit.



The rainfall in Israel is dependant on our actions! Everyday we read in the second paragraph of Shema that if we act nicely and follow God's mitzvot, He will give us rain and the fruits will grow well.



1. What places do you know in Israel?
2. What are two things you love about Israel?
3. Do you know what this picture is of?



1. What places do you know in Israel?
2. What are two things you love about Israel?
3. Why is Israel special?



1. Why do you think the rain in Israel depends on our actions? What can it tell us about our relationship with God?
2. What are two things you love about Israel?
3. Why is Israel special?

Species  
**1**

# WHEAT & BARLEY

Species  
**2**



What is wheat used to make?



What is barley used to make or used for?

Tehillim 147:14

הַשֵּׁם יַגְבִּילֶךָ שְׁלוֹם תִּלְבַּח הַטִּיִּם יִשְׂבִּיעֶךָ:

.He endows your realm with well-being, and satisfies you with choice wheat

1. Do you like bread?
2. Do you feel full after eating bread?
3. Who makes bread?

1. Who makes bread?
2. How are wheat and barley different from fruit?
3. Why are wheat and barley important?

1. How are wheat and barley different from fruit?
2. Why are wheat and barley so important?
3. What is one lesson we can learn from wheat and barley for our own lives?

# 2

## Why the 15th of Shevat?

"Gemara Rosh Hashanah 14a

The New Year of the tree." Why then? Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Oshiah: Because most of the rains of the year have already fallen by then and most of the [winter] season has passed.

Rashi

Because most of the rainy season has passed, which is the time of saturation, and the sap has already risen in the trees. From now on, the fruit will begin to bud.

ראש השנה יד.

בְּאֶחָד בְּשֶׁבֶט ר"ה לְאֵילָן: מ"ט אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר א"ר  
אוֹשְׁעִיָּא הוֹאִיל וַיֵּצְאוּ רַב גְּשָׁמֵי שָׁנָה וְעַדִּין רַב תְּקוּפָה  
מִבְּחוּץ

רש"י-

הוֹאִיל וַיֵּצְאוּ רַב גְּשָׁמֵי שָׁנָה - שְׂכָבֵר עָבַר רַב יָמוֹת  
הַגְּשָׁמִים שֶׁהוּא זְמַן רְבִיעָה וְעֵלָה הַשְּׂרָף בְּאֵילָנוֹת  
וַנִּמְצְאוּ הַפְּרוֹת חוֹנְטִין מֵעֵתָה:

1. What do plants need to grow?
2. What does a plant look like before it grows?
3. Did you grow taller since last year? How does it feel?
4. Can you always see a plants' growth?

1. What do plants need to grow?
2. Do plants grow quickly or slowly? What does it look like when they grow?
3. Can you find something growing outside?

1. What do plants need to grow?
2. Do plants grow quickly or slowly? What does it look like when they grow?
3. Why do you think it is significant that plants start growing when it is still winter?



Species  
**3**

# GRAPES & FIGS

Species  
**4**



How can grapes be eaten and what can they be used to make?



How are figs usually eaten and what can they be used to make?

Micha 4:4

וְיֵשְׁבוּ אִישׁ תַּחַת גִּפְנוֹ וְתַחַת תְּאֵנָתוֹ וְאֵין מַחְרִיד כִּי־פִי ה' צְבָקוֹת דְּבַר

But every man shall sit under his grapevine or fig tree with no one to disturb ..him. for it was the Lord of Hosts who spoke

1. What do grapes and figs taste like? Are they sweet or sour?
2. What drink do we make from grapes?
3. What blessing do we make over grapes? What blessing do we make over grapejuice?

1. How are grapes and figs similar?
2. What is one lesson we can learn from grapes and figs for our own lives?
3. How can one thing be used in multiple ways? Think about something you like to do and how you can use it to help others in two ways.

1. How are grapes and figs similar?
2. Based on the pasuk in Micha, what do grapes and figs represent? Why do you think they symbolize that?
3. What is one lesson we can learn from grapes and figs for our own lives?

# 3

## Why Do We Eat Fruit on Tu B'Shevat?

Rabbi Yehuda Prero- "The Power of Blessings" (Torah.org).



The New Year for Trees, Tu B'Shvat, is a day on which we pray that we continue to receive God's blessing in the form of plentiful fruits. We ask that we be allowed to partake from the fruit of the trees in the year to come. It is also a day upon which we should recognize Who provides us with fruit, and sustenance in general. It is a day in which we should illustrate that we use the sustenance provided to us for holy purposes. There is no better way of accomplishing these tasks than by taking out a fruit, and making the blessing upon it before eating.

1. Who helps fruit grow?
2. What is your favorite fruit or vegetable? Can you thank Hashem for giving you that fruit?
3. What bracha do we say on fruit that grow on trees like apples?

1. What are two reasons we eat fruit on Tu B'Shevat?
2. Why do we say brachot on food before we eat them?
3. How does a blessing elevate the act of eating?

1. What are two reasons we eat fruit on Tu B'Shevat?
2. Why do we say brachot on food before we eat them?
3. How can we bring God into everyday things that we do, like we do with eating by making a blessing?

Species

5

# POMEGRANATES & OLIVES

Species

6



*Did you know*

The High Priest, Kohein Gadol, had pomegranates and bells on the hem of his priestly robe (Shemot 28:31-34). While the bells let everyone know the Kohein Gadol was approaching, and made the Kohein Gadol constantly aware that He was serving God, the silent pomegranates next to the bells represent the importance of humility for even the greatest of people. (Alshich as quoted by Rabbi David Milston).

Olive oil was used to light the menorah in the Temple, the Beit HaMikdash. Olives are seen as a symbol of peace and show that we should spread the light of peace to the world.

1. Pomegranate seeds are sweet like the mitzvot. Have you ever tasted a pomegranate? How do you feel when you do a mitzvah?
2. What is something nice you can say to your sibling or friend?

1. There is an idea that the pomegranate seeds are like mitzvot. Why do you think there is a connection between the two?
2. How can we spread peace in this world? How can we act towards one another in a nicer way?
3. Bonus- Why does the pomegranate symbolize humility?

1. Why do you think the olive branch is a sign of peace? Think about the nature of olives- the trees can last for a very long time, but the olives taste bitter when raw.
2. Bonus question- do you know the first place the olive branch is mentioned in the Torah? (Hint: it has to do with a bird).

# 4

## What is Special About the Seven Species of Israel?

Rabbi Yehudah Prero- "Fruits of Holiness," (Torah.org).

The Bach explains why we should (and why indeed we do) request the ability to partake of the fruits of Israel. There is an intrinsic holiness to the Land of Israel. This holiness is not limited to the spiritual realm. The holiness actually manifests itself in a physical form as well. The fruits that are nurtured from the earth of the Land of Israel not only extract water and nutrients from the land – they extract the holiness of the land as well. When partaking of the fruits, we ingest physical nourishment as well as spiritual sustenance.



1. Can you come up with a song for the Seven Species? They are: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and date honey.
2. Do you have a toy or a blanket that is very special to you? Why is it special? The Seven Species are also very special.

1. Can you come up with a song for the Seven Species? They are: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and date honey.
2. Have you ever been to Israel? Did it feel any different than America?
3. Have you ever felt very close to God? When?

1. Can you come up with a song or rap for the Seven Species? They are: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and date honey.
2. Have you ever been to Israel? Did it feel any different than America?
3. Have you ever felt very close to God? When?

Species  
7

# DATE HONEY



How do dates and honey taste? What is the texture of honey?

Shemot 3:8

ואֲרֵד לְהַצִּילוֹ | מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וְלְהַעֲלֹתוֹ מִן־הָאֶרֶץ הַהִוא אֶל־אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה וְרַחְבָּה אֶל־אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ...  
I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey

1. Have you ever tasted honey? How does it taste? What else is sweet?
2. How can the Torah be sweet like honey?

1. How is date honey different from the other six species?
2. Why do you think the land of Israel is described as "flowing with milk and honey?"
3. What can honey teach us about how we should view Israel?

1. Why do you think the land of Israel is described as "flowing with milk and honey?"
2. How do milk and honey differ?
3. What can we learn from honey and dates about how we should view Israel?



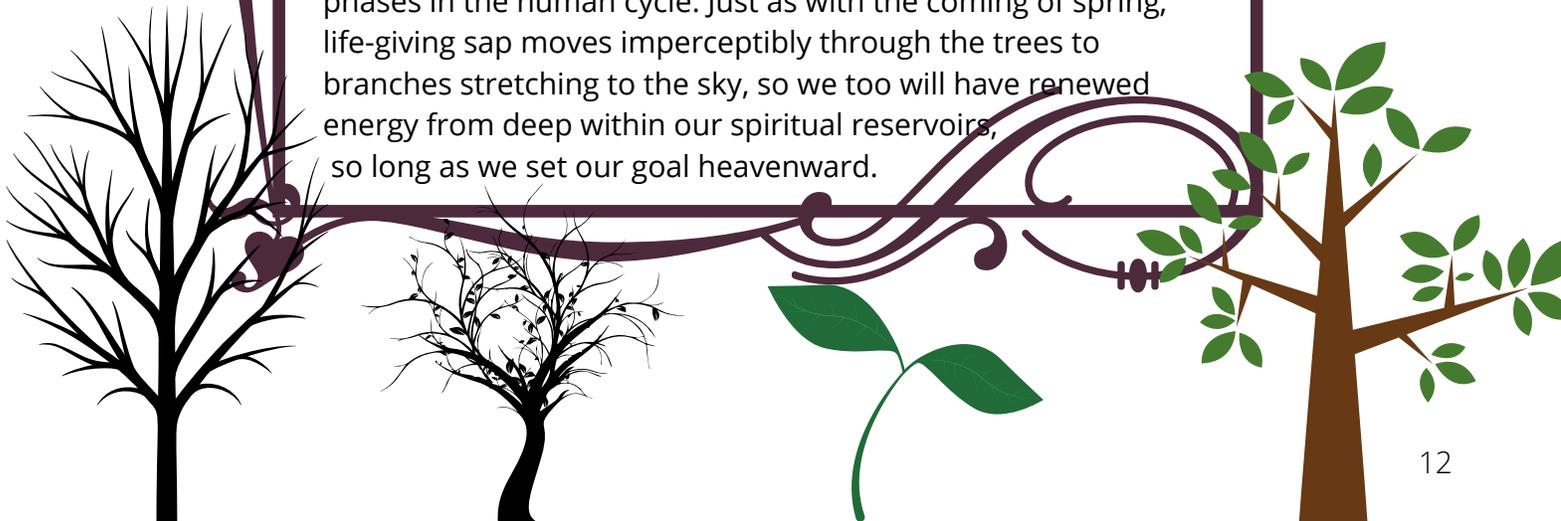
# What Are We Meant to Learn From Tu B'Shevat?

Rabbi Ephraim Nisenbaum, "Teachings of the Trees," Power Lines – Insights and Reflections on the Jewish Holidays, Targum Press

Let us examine the comparison between man and trees in order to understand the message on Tu B'Shvat for humankind. The tree goes through cycles in its life. The heavy-laden tree of summer empties itself of fruit in the autumn, and then slowly loses its leaves, one by one. By winter time, the tree stands shorn of its previous glory. For all purposes, it appears to have died.

But then comes Tu B'Shvat! In the midst of the cold winter days, when all vegetation seems frozen or dead, the sap of the tree starts to flow beneath the surface bark. Rising slowly from roots buried in the hardened soil, the sap pushes its way up, pumping new life into outstretched branches that reach towards the heavens. In life, we too often go through cycles of growth. Periods of renewal and growth may alternate with times of stagnation or dormancy. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe cites that this cycle is part of man's nature. He adds that a person must not become disillusioned when spiritual growth seems halted; the "low" period will usually be followed by a "high" period that will yield new opportunities for growth (AleI Shur, Vol. I, p. 34).

That is the message of Tu B'Shvat: Even when we feel lethargic, in a rut, and seem to have lost the drive to achieve, we must not despair. Just as winter is an annual hiatus in the life cycle of trees, so bouts of lethargy and unproductivity are necessary phases in the human cycle. Just as with the coming of spring, life-giving sap moves imperceptibly through the trees to branches stretching to the sky, so we too will have renewed energy from deep within our spiritual reservoirs, so long as we set our goal heavenward.



# ANSWER GUIDE

p.4

The fact that the rain in Israel depends on our actions, represents the relationship between God and the Jewish People and what He expects of us. In God's eyes, we are active partners in perfecting the world and the way we do that is through our actions and treating others properly and with respect. Moreover, through this correlation, God is teaching us that we are responsible for our actions and are held accountable for what we do and say. This idea is mentioned in the second paragraph of Shema, "V'Haya" (Devarim 11).

Israel is special as it is the nation that God promised our forefather Avraham as an inheritance for his descendants, the Jewish People. It is the land where our Avot and Imahot, forefather and mothers, walked before us, the destination of the Jewish People after being freed from Egypt, receiving the Torah, and wandering in the desert, and the land our people have been ever since. It is the land in which God's "eyes are constantly upon" (Devarim 11:12) and where God's presence rests most imminently. It is the land upon which the two Batei Mikdash (The Holy Temple) stood and where the third Beit HaMikdash will stand. It is the land in which we can most fully be God's people and live as a nation sanctifying His name and spreading His light.

p.5

Wheat and barley are used to make bread, the primary sustenance of humans (especially in earlier times). Whereas fruit are edible as they are, we need to work in order to make wheat and barley edible. This can teach us an important lesson about our role in this world- though everything comes from God, we are meant to be His partners and use the tools He gave us to build and create.

p.7

Based on the pasuk in Micha, grapes and figs represent a time of peace and security. Grapes and figs are similar in that they can both be used in many different forms- they can be eaten as they are, turned into a drink, can be dried, and figs can also be pressed into cakes. This can teach us the potential that we all have and the many paths there are to achieving our goals. Peace does not mean we all do the same thing or walk on the same path. It means we are able to respect the unique paths of each individual.

p.8

When we make brachot on food, we are taking a moment to pause and recognize the true Source for all of our food and sustenance. It is a way to bring God into even our mundane actions of eating and keep Him at the forefront of our conscience. In addition, it instills within us a sense of gratitude and humility.

p.9

Just as olives often taste bitter when eaten raw and require effort before they are transformed into more edible olives or olive oil, so too peace requires effort. Aharon, the High Priest and brother of Moshe, was known for "loving peace and chasing after peace." It is not enough to merely love peace, we have to actively pursue it in order to acquire it.

# ANSWER GUIDE

## CONTINUED

The first mention of an olive branch in the Torah is in Parshat Noach. After the waters of the flood stopped growing stronger, Noach sent out the dove to check if the waters receded. The dove returned with an olive branch in its mouth (Bereshit 8:11). Rashi, quoting the Talmud, explains the significance of the olive by entering the mind, so to speak, of the dove. The dove was "saying," "Better my food be bitter as an olive and from the hands of God, and not as sweet as honey from the hands of flesh and blood." The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that the deeper message behind this midrash is that we should trust in God rather than the promises of man.

([https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/3807806/jewish/Why-Is-the-Olive-Branch-a-Symbol-of-Peace.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3807806/jewish/Why-Is-the-Olive-Branch-a-Symbol-of-Peace.htm))

One reason as to why the pomegranate symbolizes humility is because the top is shaped like a crown, reminding us of before Whom we stand, the King of all Kings- God. Moreover, the multitude of seeds in a pomegranate all appear the same, yet each one maintains its own shape and seed. We all were created in the image of God and are united in that way. At the same time, we were each endowed with unique gifts and talents. That does not make us better than anyone else. Rather, that reminds us that we each have our own mission and purpose in this world.

p.11

There are many reasons behind the description of Israel as a land flowing with milk and honey. A few suggestions:

The Ramban focuses on the word "flowing" and explains that both milk and honey are produced most abundantly in well-nourished or fertile pastures and lands. Therefore this phrase indicates the fertility and prosperity of the Land of Israel.

The Midrash Yalkut Shimoni explains that milk represents "superior quality, richness of taste, and nourishment," while honey symbolizes sweetness. Together, they teach us that Israel is "both nourishing and pleasant."

A third idea is presented by Rabbi Posner on chabad.org. He writes, "Some point out that honey and milk share a paradoxical quality. Honey is kosher, though it is produced by a non-kosher insect. Milk is kosher, though it comes from a cow whose meat may not be eaten together with milk. The goodness of Israel will often times come from places where it is least expected."

[https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/624194/jewish/Why-is-Israel-called-the-land-of-Milk-and-Honey.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/624194/jewish/Why-is-Israel-called-the-land-of-Milk-and-Honey.htm)