

Activi-trees for Tu Bishvat:

- Eat lots of fruit!
- Plant seeds to grow indoors. Or make a list or map for outdoor planting in the Spring.
- Sing a song for/to the trees! Celebrate their birthday with games, hugs, or kind words.
- Make a pinecone birdfeeder and hang it on a tree. Practice being a *shomer adamah*, guardian of the Earth!
- Come up with ideas for how to help trees and the Earth.
- Read a tree-themed story or come up with your own.
- Make tree art and send us a picture. It could be in next month's booklet if you want!



For the Kids' Crew
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TU BISHVAT



Tu Bishvat | The 15th of Shevat



Tu Bishvat is a tree birthday! It literally means the 15th day of the month of Shevat. It is also called Rosh Hashanah La'ilanot, or the New Year for the trees.

In the land of Israel, this is the start of Springtime, at the end of the rainy season. Tu Bishvat is when the sap first starts to rise and the trees get ready to make fruit again.



Why do we need to know how old trees are?

There are Jewish customs around food—what, when, and how to eat it. These customs are important so that the whole community is healthy and taking care of each other.

Some rules are about making sure that everyone has enough to eat. For example, farmers leave the edges of their fields unpicked, so that other people who need food can help themselves.



Some rules are about sustaining the land. For example, once every seven years, there is a shmita (or release) year; there is no farming so the land can rest and renew itself.



A rule with trees is that no one can eat from a newly-planted tree for at least three years. This gives the tree enough time to put down strong roots. So to figure out when they could start eating the fruits, rabbis agreed that on Tu Bishvat all trees would turn one year older.

Here are some other things you can do this Tu Bishvat:

- **Help birds** - Feed birds high fat foods to help them through the Winter. Put out birdhouses for Spring nesting.
- **Help wildlife** - Build safe travel pathways with logs or brush. Lookout for animal dens and give them space.
- **Garden** - Plant wildflowers and native trees. Compost.
- **Activism** - Contact your mayor, member of Parliament, or Prime Minister to tell them about an issue you care about.
- **Fundraising** - Collect money to donate to an organization or a cause that helps the Earth.
- **Teamwork** - Join a group of people interested in the environment.
- **Stewardship** - Choose a place close to your home (park, creek, etc.) to 'adopt'.

What are your ideas for ways that you can help trees and the land?



Perot | Fruits

Tu Bishvat is a good time to think about how we can be *Shomrei Adamah*, Guardians of the Earth. Taking care of the Earth is a big, important responsibility!

One *mitzah* everyone can do is *bal tashchit*, "Do not destroy." For example, this means not to cut down trees for no reason. Bal tashchit tells us that waste of any kind is wrong—even wasting a tiny mustard seed. In fact, we need all the different parts of nature to live.



There are lots of things we can do at home to help reduce waste! Consider the 5 Rs before sending to a landfill.

Refuse Reduce Reuse Recycle Rot

The Sages compared human beings to the date palm tree. Because every part of the tree is useful and nothing is wasted: the fruits make food, the fronds make roofs, the bark makes rope, the wood makes houses, etc.



Like the date palm tree, every person is important. Every person has their own gifts, and no one is useless. Remember "Lo alecha ham'lacha ligmor." It isn't up to you alone to complete the work. This means everyone has a part to play in protecting the Earth.

"All trees speak with one another. All trees speak with other creatures. All trees were created for companionship with other creatures."
—Midrash

One big tradition on Tu Bishvat is to enjoy fruits! Some people eat 15 fruits, to represent the 15 days of Shevat. Some people eat fruits in a special seder. Others just try to enjoy as many as possible!

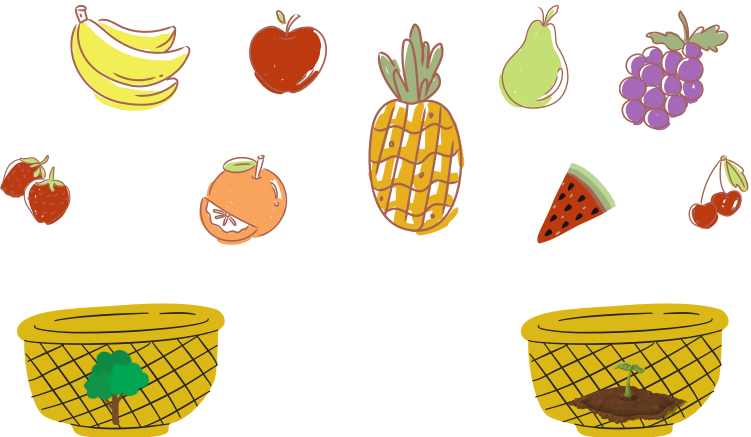
When choosing, you might want to think of a "new" fruit—that means, a fruit that you haven't eaten since before Rosh Hashannah. Then you can say the *shehechyanu* blessing.

Blessing for new experiences

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu, Melech ha'olam, she-hechyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higi'anu la-z'man hazeh.

Blessed are you, Adonai our G-d, Ruler of the Universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us so that we could reach this moment

There are two main blessings that you can say before eating a fruit. The difference is whether a fruit grows on a tree or from the ground. Can you figure out where these fruits belong?



Fruit from a tree

Fruit from the earth

Blessing for fruit from a tree*

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
borei p'ri ha'eitz.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe,
who creates the fruit of the tree.

*Fruits from a tree include: apple, orange, pear, cherry, fig,
date, olive, tree nuts, mango, pomegranate, etc.

Blessing for fruit from the earth**

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
borei p'ri ha'adamah.*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe,
who creates the fruit of the earth.

**Fruits from the earth include: pineapple, banana, strawberry,
melon, grape, tomato, carrot, etc.

Zeraim | Seeds

Another tradition on Tu Bishvat is planting trees and seeds. Some people plant parsley seeds so that they will have fresh parsley on Passover. Some families plant a tree on Tu Bishvat, especially if a baby is born that year.

In all these cases, people are planting something for the future. Planting a seed or a tree is a little bit like making a wish. It can take a very long time for a tree to grow! In fact, there is a story in the Talmud that is exactly about that.



Shoreshim | Roots

"Take care not to damage and destroy the world, because if you destroy it, there is no one after you to repair it." —Midrash

Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah said: "One whose wisdom exceeds their good deeds is like a tree with many branches, but few roots: the wind comes and plucks it up and overturns it."



"But one whose good deeds exceed their wisdom is like a tree with few branches but many roots: even if all the winds in the world come and blow upon it, it cannot be uprooted."



Our good deeds are our roots. Like roots, they support us and keep us standing. They help us grow strong and healthy. And they help create more earth for others to grow.

Did you know that trees can communicate through their roots?

Trees can send messages in the forest using a mycorrhizal network. They can send chemical and electrical signals through roots and fungi (like mushrooms).

Wood you believe it?



Meet a Tree Game

This is a fun game to challenge your senses and try to really get to "meet" a tree. You can play in any forested area, ideally with lots of different species and sizes of trees. Avoid places with steep cliffs or roads nearby.

Play in a pair, with one person being the investigator and the other as their guide.

1. The investigator puts on a blindfold or closes their eyes.
2. The guide carefully leads the investigator to a tree (you can add in some spins to make it harder to guess!).
3. The investigator has one minute to explore the tree using all their senses except sight.



How big is the tree? Does it have a smell? What does the bark feel like? Can you feel any needles, leaves, fruits, or holes? Do the branches bend or snap?

4. The guide brings the investigator back to the start point (more spins!).
5. The investigator opens their eyes and tries to find the tree they met. They can have 3 guesses.
6. Switch roles or locations and repeat!

Tree Hugging Magic

There is a Jewish folktale about Tu Bishvat. It is the only time of year that the trees can move around and hug each other. Anyone who sees the trees hugging will have one of their wishes come true.

One day, Honi the circle-drawer was walking down a quiet road. He saw an old woman planting a carob tree. She was sitting on top of a hill, just on the edge of a forest.

Honi walked up the hill and stopped in front of her, his arms crossed against his chest. He said, "What are you doing? Don't you know carob trees take 70 years to grow fruit? Do you think you will still be alive to eat the fruit of this *charuv*? This is a waste of time!"

The old woman said, "I found trees in the world when I was born. My grandparents planted them for me. So, I am planting for my grandchildren."

Honi didn't know what to say to that. He had a lot to think about, so he sat down in the shade of a nearby tree. He had a little snack and curled up for a short nap. Things always felt clearer after a nap!

But while he was sleeping, a small cave grew around him, hiding him from the world outside. He slept and slept and...

He woke up, stretching and yawning. His mouth had that funny taste from sleeping so long. He crawled out of the cave—he definitely didn't remember that being there!

He saw a beautiful carob tree sitting at the top of the hill, the branches full of curly carob pods. A stranger was picking the fruit and tossing them in a basket.

Honi asked, "Did you plant this tree?"

"No, my grandmother planted it."

"Wow! I must have been dreaming for 70 years!" Honi laughed. "Do you want any help with that?"

Together, they finished picking the fruit, washed the pods, and made a carob almond cake. It was the best thing Honi had tasted in 70 years.



Adamah | Land

"If not for the trees, human life could not exist." —Midrash

Tu Bishvat is sometimes called Jewish Earth Day. This is a good time to think about our relationship with the land. There are many things that we need, like trees, water, and air, to live healthy and happy lives.

The Hebrew words for 'land' and 'human being' are very similar. This makes sense because in the Torah, G-d made human beings from the earth.

אדמה land, earth
adamah

אדם human being
adam

Human beings are part of the land, like the Hebrew words show us. Modern sciences also show that everything from our DNA to our species' evolution means that we are very connected to the Earth and all the other beings who live here.

Did you know humans share genes in common with all animals and plants on Earth?

99% with chimpanzees

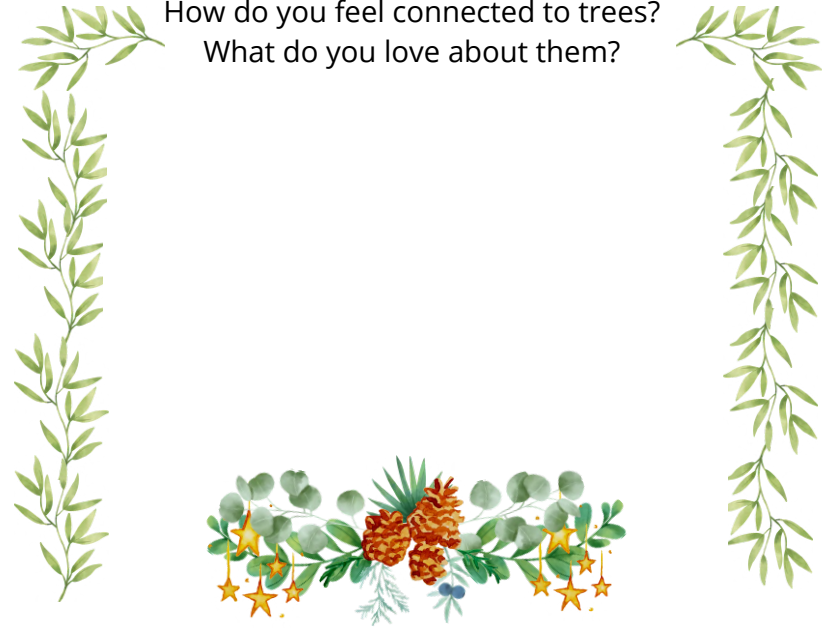
90% with cats

60% with jellyfish

24% with grapes



How do you feel connected to trees?
What do you love about them?



Tu Bishvat is a great time to spend time with your tree family! You could throw a little birthday party for the trees, decorate their branches, and make them a card. You can even sing them a happy birthday!

A classic Tu Bishvat song is Hashkaydeeyah Porachat, written by Yisrael Dushman. The lyrics are cheerful and begin with the blossoming almond tree, the golden sun shining, and the birds singing.



Hashkaydeeyah porachat
V'shemesh paz zorachat.
Tziporim merosh kol gag
Mevasrot et bo hachag.



Tu Bishvat hi-gi-yah,
Chag ha-i-la-not (x2)

