

# Hadracha Choveret



תנועת בני עקיבא  
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## Tu B'Shvat



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Tu Bshvat – Parashat Beshalach

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Dear Roshim, Sganim and Madrichim,

Welcome to another wonderful week of Bnei Akiva. It's snow doubt (gettit?!) that you've been enjoying this weather we've been having of late!

It seems funny to be celebrating trees and nature when all we can see is white, and not green.....but nevertheless Tu Bshvat is round the corner. Try to ensure that you teach your Chanichim something new about Tu Bshvat – for those of them who go to Jewish schools or Cheder, they'll know the usual stuff. What you can do at Sviva is bring an entirely new perspective of one of our lovely, fun festivals. So that's your challenge for this week (and always!)

Bhatzlacha!

Bevirkat Chaverim l'Torah v'Avodah

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## Aims:

- To learn about the source of Tu B'Shvat.
- To look at how Tu B'Shvat is celebrated today.
- To think about the impact of the State of Israel on Jewish life.

**So there you have it...Tu B'Shvat. But what is this mini-festival all about? Well, the name doesn't give it much of a clue as it is just a date – 15<sup>th</sup> Shvat! Let's see where it originates from...**

Tu B'shvat is first mentioned in Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:1 as one of four new years in the Jewish calendar:

- 1) 1st Nissan: New Year for the kings (you start counting the reigns of Jewish kings from here) & for festivals.
- 2) 1st Elul: New Year for the tithing of animals (though R' Elazar & R' Shimon actually hold this was on 1<sup>st</sup> Tishrei).
- 3) 1<sup>st</sup> Tishrei: new year for reckoning the year count (5770 etc), for the Shmitta and Jubilee years, for the planting of trees and for vegetables
- 4) The first of Tishrei: new year for the tree, according to Beit Shammai; Beit Hillel say that this is on 15<sup>th</sup> Shvat.

With regard for the Rosh Hashanah for trees, both schools of thought, Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, investigated the timing of the new year by making a series of observations of the weather, noting when rainfall came and how the life of trees evolved - and in accordance with the differing results, the margin of a fortnight between the schools of thought emerged. The entire discussion had a single goal: to fix a new year for trees in connection with the rules

of tithing. At the end it was concluded on the **15th Shvat** according to **Beit Hillel's** suggestion.

## **Practical Implications**

The main halachic implication is that on 15<sup>th</sup> Shvat we do not say Tachanun, a prayer said after the Amidah in Shacharit and Mincha, both on Tu B'Shvat and at Mincha the previous day. The other key outcome is that we don't call the festival *A B'Shvat!*

### **Tu B'Shvat in the Modern Era**

*(what's with this whole tree planting thing...?)*

The custom of planting trees is not an old age tradition but rather a recent custom. The custom began with the writer, researcher and Rabbi, Ze'ev Yavetz, who lived in the moshava of Zichron Yaakov a century ago as well as being one of the founders of Mizrachi (Bnei Akiva's parent organisation in Israel). R' Yavetz arrived in the country in 1887, and settled in the village of Yehud, near Petach Tikva, which was a spiritual centre at that time. In Yehud, R' Yavetz began his work "Toldot Israel" (A History of Israel). During that period he sent a letter to Baron Rothschild, containing a detailed study program for schools throughout the land. In due course he was invited to head the school at Zichron Yaakov. R' Yavetz proposed to celebrate different Festivals, one of them Tu B'Shvat.



Me casually planting a tree in a forest in Sderot with Torani back in 2009....☺

Ya'vetz's explanation of his initiative was:

“*"To create a tree planting festival that will make the planting of saplings in the earth enjoyable: the lord created plants for our fathers to satisfy themselves with their fine produce and to gain pleasure from their beauty. Schools ought to make a holiday of the day that has been intended, since antiquity, for Israel as a New Year of Trees, by including in its curriculum, with maximum grace and beauty, the trees, the saplings and the roses."*

”

With the establishment of moshava settlements, Jewish educators saw the need to ground the renewal of the Jewish community in the land of Israel with the planting of the trees. In the year 1892, on



the only Tu B'Shvat that R' Yavetz spent in Zichron Yaakov, he went out with his pupils to plant trees in the area.

Thus, a new tradition was born in the land of Israel, that of Jewish children going out to plant on this day. The teachers' union and the Jewish National Fund accepted this custom in 1908 and gave it an educational dimension. It was a way for children to participate physically in the development of the land and improvement of the landscape.



Since then, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) is the institution responsible for forest plantation, cultivation of virgin forest and the creation of parks and parking areas for public use. This project is unique and **Israel is the only state in the world which claimed**



**more trees at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than there were at the start of it.**

Did you know.....

On 5 November 2001, the General Assembly declared 6 November of each year as the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict ([resolution 56/4](#)). In taking this action, it considered that damage to the environment in times of armed conflict impairs ecosystems and natural resources long after the period of conflict, often extending beyond the limits of national territories and the present generation. The Assembly also recalled the United Nations [Millennium Declaration](#), which emphasized the necessity of working to protect our common environment.



Much like this verse in Devarim which states...

כי תצור אל עיר ימים רבים להלחם עליה  
לתפסה לא תשחית את עצה לנדח עליו גרון כי  
ממנו תאכל ואתו לא תכרת כי האדם עץ  
השדה לבא מפניך במצור

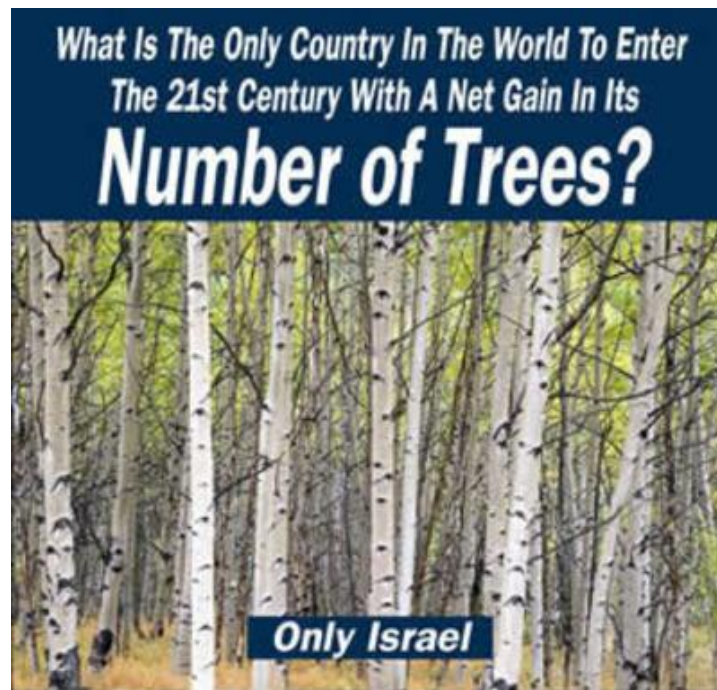
“When you besiege a city for many days to wage war against it to seize it, do not destroy its trees by swinging an axe against them, for from it you will eat, and you shall not cut it down; is the tree of the field a man that it should enter the siege before you.”

Pretty cool eh?!



## *Points* TO *Ponder*

- + What do you think about the new meaning given to Tu B'Shvat?
- + Do you think it is in-keeping with the original idea?
- + How important is Tu B'Shvat in the Jewish calendar today? Is there a difference whether in the UK or Israel?







## Tu B'Shvat in Israel

Nowadays, Tu B'Shvat is synonymous with planting trees and making the land of Israel bloom. This shows what an amazing impact the State of Israel had on Jewish life! It has taken a relatively minor day in the Jewish calendar and has brought it to life. In kibbutzim, Tu B'Shvat is celebrated as a holiday and it is earmarked as a day to care about the environment. Over 1,000,000 Israelis now take part in the Jewish National Fund's tree-planting activities organized every year on Tu B'Shvat.



In keeping with the idea of Tu B'Shvat marking the revival of nature, symbolized by the budding of the almond tree, many of Israel's major institutions have chosen this day for their inauguration. The cornerstone-laying of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem took place on Tu B'Shvat 1918; the Technion in Haifa, on Tu B'Shvat 1925; and the Knesset, on Tu B'Shvat 1949.



Another aspect of Tu B'Shvat that is often celebrated is the custom to have lots of fruit in a Tu B'Shvat seder. In the Middle Ages, Tu B'Shvat was celebrated with a feast of fruits in keeping with the Mishnaic description of the holiday as a 'New Year'. In the 1600s, the kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Luria of Tzfat (the Ari) and his disciples instituted a Tu B'Shvat seder in which the fruits and trees of the land of Israel were given symbolic meaning.

The main idea was that eating 15 fruits, including the seven species, was praising the Land of Israel and would help to bring about the redemption.

In Israel, the kabbalistic Tu B'Shvat seder has been revived, and is now celebrated by many Jews, religious and secular. You can even buy Tu B'Shvat Haggadot nowadays!





## Peula Ideas

- **Fruit basket:** An old favourite, worth playing for this most 'green' of peulot! Maybe play it with real fruits and real baskets (use your imagination here!).
- **Rebrand:** Take an old English object that is out of fashion and rebrand it to make it nice and modern. Make it into a competition and the chanichim can present the rebranding in the form of an advert.
- **Seder Night:** Have a special Tu B'Shevat Seder (see the internet for various versions) and have a fruit Seudah Shlishit – maybe even invite the community/parents.
- **Plant Trees:** Use this week to get people together to plant trees in Israel. You can get a certificate from the JNF that you can display in your shul.

## ***Hadracha Tip of the Week***

*Think of ideas for your sviva or just your kvuzta that are outside the two hours on a Shabbat afternoon. There's nothing to say you can't have a one-off meeting during the week or on Motzei Shabbat where you do a special activity – tree planting, for instance!*



## -KVUTSAH PLANNING SHEET-

THEME		
<u>Aim 1:</u>	<u>Aim 2:</u>	<u>Aim 3:</u>
<u>Related Activities</u>	<u>Related Activities</u>	<u>Related Activities</u>
↓	↓	↓
Points to discuss:	Points to discuss:	Points to discuss:
↘	↓	↘
Conclusion:		
↓		
Tziud needed:		