

TU B'SHVAT COMPANION

A Handbook for The New Year of the Tree

Livnot
U'Lehibanot



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With gratitude to
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Livnot U'Lehibanot

A Handbook for The New Year of the Tree

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Partly based on:

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- "Learning Under the Tree – A Practical Guide to Judaism and Nature" by Michael Even Esh and Yehonatan Shumer, 2014

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Livnot U'Lehibanot

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WELCOME!

The handbook you are holding is a practical guide for celebrating Tu B'Shvat. Like a tree, this companion didn't grow in a day. Livnot U'Lehibanot has been celebrating this holiday for years, and not only on its calendar day. This book is a compilation of ideas and practices that have been developed by different Livnot guides and educators throughout the years, based on the ancient and oh-so-relevant wisdom of our Jewish Sages and sources.

Tu B'Shvat, the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of Shvat, is also known as the New Year of the Tree, and is a unique date in the Jewish calendar. Its celebration as a holiday was initiated in Tzfat about five hundred years ago. This day has nothing to do with Jews specifically, but has much to do with the Jewish perspective on nature, the world, and our place in it as people. It combines philosophy and practice and expresses our desires and values.

In this edition, we have tried to bring some practical suggestions for how to celebrate Tu B'Shvat, blended with some sources, sparks of wisdom, thought-provoking questions and different perspectives on the Jewish way of experiencing and celebrating life and creation.

This handbook would not have been possible if it weren't for our wonderful educators - Aryeh Ben-David, Michael Even-Esh, Yehonatan Shumer and Shlomo Tal, for developing the content and method of celebrating Tu B'Shvat on Livnot programs.

L'Chaim, and B'Teavon!

Livnot U'Lehibanot – To Build & Be Built

Tzfat, Israel



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FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

So, you've decided to lead a Tu B'Shvat celebration. Great! It is a celebration of trees, food, sensitivity, ecological awareness, the connection between Judaism and nature, the earth and the universe. Sounds big and it is!

In general, we recommend trying to be creative and take the celebration in the direction that most fits you and your participants. We have some suggestions that may be helpful for you, which we have gathered through decades of experience.

Don't hesitate to come up with your own ways to celebrate this special holiday.

First of all, you are not alone. Livnot staff will always be more than glad to help you. Additionally, we strongly encourage you to read the entire preface, so it will be easier for you to decide what direction you want to take this celebration and which values you want to emphasize.

If your co-celebrators are hungry, it's better to be sensitive and get straight to the main part of the meal. A satiated stomach may help mindfulness.

In most cases, it is good to inform your audience in advance what the experience is going to include, in other words, give the big picture.

A good way to elevate the atmosphere during the celebration, and to combine the elements of mind, body and soul, is to incorporate music. Our suggestions for Tu B'Shvat songs can be found at the end of this booklet. While thinking about a songlist, we recommend a mixture of songs that everyone knows and some that should be new to your audience.

Here are some suggested ways to facilitate the celebration:

Suggestion 1: Start with an oral introduction about the origins and reasons of celebrating Tu B'Shvat. Proceed to the section of the Seven Species. Choose a few to focus on. Our suggestion is not to skip over wheat & barley and grapes & wine, since they both have a special stature in Jewish tradition. For each one of the species, ask a volunteer to read the introduction, the values, and then guide a discussion using the sources we suggested. You can finish by asking the participants how, using ideas from this evening, they suggest to live a meaningful life and to see every experience as an opportunity to grow.

Suggestion 2: Our Sages were inspired by nature. They used it to reveal often hidden wisdom in a way that is relevant also today. One way to add

to the celebration is to invite the participants to go "freestyle." This means that after discussing a few species and the wisdom they represent, ask your participants to pick up a fruit of their desire and to share a value or an idea this fruit awakens in them. We recommend you demonstrate first.

Suggestion 3: If you have the privilege of knowing some of the participants at your celebration or if you have more than three hours together – you may ask your co-celebrators to split into a few groups. Give each of the groups one of the Seven Species and ask them to have a discussion based on the sources suggested in this companion, their general knowledge and any other information they can find online/in books. Then, each group should prepare a presentation of their fruit in a creative way. We suggest inviting one of the groups to prepare an introduction to Tu B'Shvat from the preface section. When everyone is done, sit around the table and invite each one of the groups to present their part according to the order mentioned in the book. After the first group of presenters is done, thank them and invite everyone to taste the fruit presented. You may suggest everyone goes "freestyle" and shares their personal wisdom awakened by the current fruit. In between presentations, you might want to sing a song or two. The evening can be finished in the same way as in Suggestion #1.

Suggestion 4: Another possible option is to open the event with a discussion around key values that the participants care about or incorporate into their lives. Then, choose to focus on fruits according to the values your participants have chosen.

Suggestion 5: This suggestion is more relevant for smaller groups (20 or less), where most of the participants know or are acquainted with each other. If you have enough time,, you can add to your celebration by incorporating a "Positive Outlook" workshop towards the end. It's generally better to get to this part of the celebration after being "perfumed" with a glass of wine or two – it may help the participants to open up more easily. During the workshop, every participant in his/her turn will face the person sitting to their right and tell them the positive quality (ies) they see in them. It should be addressed personally, and not just "shared with the audience." After complimenting the person to their right, the same person should turn back to the group and share a positive quality they see in themselves. This activity is related to Tu B'shvat in the sense that just as we strive to see the hidden qualities and wisdom within nature and it's fruits, so we strive to see the hidden beauty within ourselves and others.

Good Luck!

INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years, Jews have been paying special attention to this day, Tu B'Shvat, the fifteenth day of the month of Shvat (Tet-Vav, two Hebrew letters with the numerical value of nine and six, are pronounced as Tu when combined together). What's so special about this day? So special that our ancestors have given it the privilege of being one of the four Jewish New-Years (yes, we have four!), as it says in the Mishnah:

*"Four New-Years could be found: On the first of Nissan is Rosh HaShana for kings..., on the first of Elul is Rosh HaShana for animal's tithe..., on the first of Tishrei is Rosh HaShana for years... On the first of Shvat is Rosh HaShana for the tree, according to Beit Shammai. Beit Hillel says – on the fifteenth of this month."
(Rosh HaShana, Tractate A)*

Obviously, as Jews, our art of "arguing" awakens immediately. It demands the following questions regarding the New Year of the Tree:

1. Why on this specific date?
2. Why do we need a New Year for the Tree?
3. Why is there an argument on this specific holiday, and who is right?
4. Why does the Mishnah say "for the tree" and not "for trees", like it says "for kings" for example?

The Origins of Tu B'Shvat

Rabbi Elazar says that in Israel, most of the annual rain falls by this date. Rashi, the famous commentator, explains that due to this fact, trees become moist, and from this date on the fruits begin to flourish, meaning it is the time for coming out of the dormancy of winter. So Tu B'Shvat, according to the Talmud, is the time when leaf buds begin to develop on trees which stood dormant throughout the cold season and potential for the formation of fruit is revealed – remember this is the Middle East and not Connecticut.

Interesting... It seems like the amount of time spent by our Sages out there in nature was not less than the time spent in the Beit-Midrash, the study-hall! They paid attention to the natural environment around them, and founded this holiday based on their surroundings. You won't find a passage in the Torah that says: "And thou shalt remember and observe the holiday of Shvat." If so, why would our Sages choose to add a holiday on their own initiative?

Perhaps, our Sages understood that the essence of Torah is to internalize the wisdom we were taught so that it becomes an integral part of ourselves. This is why our Sages called the Torah - Enlightenment. Once our learning matures, after the principles are taught and the examples are given, we are expected to "get it" on our own and to live our life by those principles. In a similar way, one of our great Sages, Hillel, understood the essence of the Torah and passed it on to a curious but dispassionate convert who wanted to learn the whole Torah while standing on one foot. What did Hillel answer him? "Whatever is hateful onto you – don't do to your fellow, everything else is commentary, now go and learn."

So, it seems like Tu B'Shvat was developed as a product of our own spiritual growth and maturity, by internalizing the ideas of the Torah and taking them one step further. It could not have been commanded, it could only have been awakened within.

The Jewish Approach to Ecological Balance

Expanding on the second question, Jewish tradition holds every living thing (and even inanimate objects) as containing a certain amount of wonder, as if there is a secret hiding inside of everything, yearning to be recognized, revealed and even protected. In our tradition, trees are to be respected. Just as there are human rights and animal rights, there are tree rights. For instance, you can't just wantonly chop down a tree. In order to sensitize farmers (and the rest of us, too), and to prevent us from relating to a tree as a "fruit factory", every seventh year during the Sabbatical Year (Hebrew: Shmittah), the pruning of trees is forbidden. Trees deserve a vacation too. A similar law in Judaism has to do with circumcision. But not the circumcision that you are thinking of; rather the circumcision of trees! How do you circumcise a tree? Simple... don't eat its fruit for the first three years. In Judaism, the fruit of the tree's first three years is called orlah, or "uncircumcised." The fruit is set aside, prohibited for human consumption or utilization. As if to say: remember, trees are not machines, they are alive! You cannot just use them as you want. They have an independent existence which goes beyond serving humans. Respect it!

In the story of Creation, the first human was placed in the middle of the Garden of Eden "to work it and to preserve it." In the Temple-era, a farmer would bring his first fruits up to Jerusalem and give them as an offering, as if to say "Not because I'm a good farmer are these fruits here today, but there is a higher force responsible." Still today, we tithe fruits in the Land of Israel, as if to say "We're not the owners of the land, but only its caretakers." This, also, constitutes a symbolic recognition that the Land of Israel really belongs to its Creator and not to its human masters.

Moreover, Judaism went one step further: Trees deserve not only a vacation from humans, but a Birthday Party too - their own New Year. And so, we celebrate Tu B'Shvat, although all the trees in Israel still seem asleep. However, not everybody notices the half-way mark in winter. Not everybody notices trees. You have to be sensitive to notice these things. The same is true with humans. Some people are so wrapped-up in their own affairs that they don't notice other people, including those less fortunate than

themselves. The Jewish tradition often tries to sensitize us to the needs of others: other humans, other living things, other objects.

"An olive tree that sheds its fruit is painted over with red and filled in with stones; the stones hold the tree in place, and the red color is so conspicuous that it attracts the attention of wayfarers and they ask for mercy upon it."
(Talmud Hullin 77b)

Doesn't that sound a little far-fetched? Asking for mercy, praying for a tree? It certainly didn't seem silly to our ancestors... and perhaps this ancient idea can be relevant to our society too; if we can open our hearts to trees and even pray for those trees that are less fortunate, perhaps we'll be able to do the same for other human beings. Social justice... can start with trees.

Jewish Pluralism

Why did Hillel's and Shammai's students disagree on the specific date of this holiday? Who is right? And what is the Jewish approach to disagreement in general?

One of the explanations suggested, is that Shammai and his students were strongly connected to the existence of the potential, even before it is revealed. From Shammai's prospective, the expression is secondary. If there is no essence, there is nothing to express. The greatest of trees starts within one small seed, and if there is no seed planted, then plowing, watering and all other actions are useless.

Hillel and his students had a different take on this issue. From their point of view, they agree about the importance of potential, but to them it seems so obvious, so natural, that it is not the reason for the celebration. In the end of the day, we were brought to this world in order to actualize our potential. They declared the 15th of the month as the New Year because it marked for them the point at which the potential began to flow and became actualized in the rebirth of the tree.

Every Hebrew month is directly related to the moon cycle and is considered to have a special quality. The Jewish year consists of twelve different month-long workshops inviting us to improve our character traits one by one. According to one of the versions of Sefer Yetzira (The book of creation, believed to be composed by Abraham), the month of Shvat relates to the quality of mindfulness.

The new moon, which is barely visible and which marks the first day of the month, represents the hidden potential within the month. On the fifteenth of each month, when the moon is full, the power of the month is considered to be revealed at its peak and easily available inside ourselves.

The month of Shvat is connected to our ability to consciously grow and improve. Beit Shammai wished to celebrate Shvat's ability on the day when all the potential of this month appears at once. Beit Hillel chose the fifteenth. Beit Shammai celebrates our ability to grow, while Beit Hillel celebrates our success.

So, who is right? A question framed this way probably does not fit the Jewish concept of learning.

"As each hammer-strike explodes to numerous sparks, so is every sentence in the Torah taken to numerous points,"
(Talmud Sanhedrin 34a)

While learning Torah, a Jewish scholar is encouraged to connect to its wisdom and to reveal his or her personal reflection on the text. On one hand, there are "Seventy Faces to the Torah", (the Kabbalists of Tzfat even believed there are 600,000) but on the other hand, we are encouraged to draw our understandings and inspiration from our sources and heritage, and not just from our personal whims.

"Just as peoples' faces differ one from another, so do their points of view," says the Talmud (Brachot 58a), considering this a blessing. Rabbi Yitzhak Luria said that as partners in Creation, our purpose of learning is not just to know what is written but to give our new commentary and point of view on it.

In most cases, the Sages decided to act upon Beit Hillel's opinion, but not because they thought Beit Shammai was wrong but because Beit Hillel's reasoning fit the common Jewish mindset of purpose and action. Yet, in certain cases, it was decided to act according to Beit Shammai, and sometimes the decision was not made at all. For example, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev would celebrate the New Year of the Tree on the first of Shvat (as Beit Shammai), since he considered it to be one of the cases in which the decision was not made on purpose in order to give people the opportunity to choose on their own. He considered himself a person of ideas rather than actions, therefore felt that the first of Shvat fit him better.

From the Desert to the Land of Israel

Returning to the last question – why did our Sages call it Rosh HaShana for the Tree (and not Trees)? This question was not asked in the Talmud, but in one of the earliest Kabbalistic writings, the Zohar. By the way, an interesting fact is that most of the questions, asked by Sages in the Zohar, were answered not by others but by the "asker." The inner Torah teaches that everything we need to know is already inside ourselves. Every time the question is asked, our own soul gives an immediate answer, but in most cases we miss it, because we don't listen or there is a lot of other noise out there.

So, the answer in the Zohar was: "in the Mishnah it says the tree and not just trees, because they meant The Great Tree Le'eila (inside/above)." Meaning, there is some kind of ability inside us and in the spiritual world in general that can be called The Great Tree. But what does that mean? How are we supposed to recognize it and what are we supposed to do with that?

We started our journey as a people after the exodus from Egypt. We were newly-released slaves, walking for forty years in the desert. We began to form our communal consciousness in that physical and existential "lack". We learned to appreciate the ability to trust the unknown and unpredictable, to love the temporary, to experience the "here and now." We didn't plan, we didn't plant. We were fed "heavenly bread," the Manna. We didn't invest ourselves into anything but the journey itself. All of this experience had one main purpose – to teach us to let go of the illusion of control.

Those years in the desert represent the self-searching that every person is encouraged by Jewish tradition to go through, so we can learn to listen to the soft and powerful tune of our soul. Yes, it does help to put all those daily distractions aside. It may involve a certain level of detachment from the physical and the convenient.

But in Jewish tradition this detachment is temporary. It has never been our purpose to stay in the desert, even though some of the Israelites wanted to. There is a time to listen, and there is a time to express, to play the beautiful tune of our soul on all of our instruments. This is why we were given the Land of Israel, as a perfect stage for us to shine on. Upon entering the land, we started to build, to plan, to plant. To plant trees, and mainly to plant

ourselves in the most compatible soil for our people, the Land of Israel. We started producing our own fruits.

Our Sages constantly likened humans to trees. King David opened his book of Psalms with the following words:

"The praises of a man are that he did not follow the counsel of the wicked... He shall be as a tree planted beside rivulets of water, which brings forth its fruit in its season, and its leaves do not wilt; and whatever he does prospers."
(Psalms 1)

Rabbi Shmuel of Sukhachev (1855-1926) gave his perspective on the reason for this comparison in general, and for our celebration of Tu B'Shvat:

"As I see, the tree is the one that connects the fruit to the land. [I]t contains the power of connection... And from the tree's physical feature, we can learn about its spiritual essence. Because of this essence, the Human is likened to the tree, as it is mentioned in the Torah: "A human is the tree of the field" (Dvarim 20:19). The inner human trait is to link the spiritual and the physical; because humans have both the soul from the spiritual worlds, and the body, the soul's vessel, from the physical."
(Shem Mishmuel on Tu B'Shvat)

Isn't it worthy of celebration, this beautiful Tree of Life within us? It represents our ability to express our infinite goodness through actions and bring unity and oneness to a world seemingly full of negativity and separation.

But, like a real tree, this holiday also had to go through a process. Until five hundred years ago, Tu B'Shvat was only recognized, honored and mentioned as one of the days we are not supposed to mourn on. Then, something special happened on a little mountain-top city in northern Israel named Tzfat. More and more teachers started revealing the spiritual sides of Judaism. This same group of people started celebrating Tu B'Shvat as a real holiday by eating from the fruits of the Land of Israel and sharing the wisdom garnered from them.

Today, Tu B'Shvat is celebrated as a kind of "arbor day" in Israel. Trees are planted, feasts are held and fruits of the Land of Israel are eaten. In many regions in Israel, the holiday is ushered in by the blossoming of the almond tree, with its bright white and pink flowers, as the almond tree is known to be an early bloomer.

Food and Spirituality in Judaism, or - Feel Free to be Amazed!

Food that is eaten daily can be taken for granted. One of the ways Judaism helps us to keep our sense of appreciation alive is by instituting blessings to be said before and after eating.

Wonder or radical amazement is the chief characteristic of the religious man's attitude toward history and nature. One attitude is alien to his spirit: taking things for granted, regarding events as a natural course of things.

To the prophets, wonder is a form of thinking. It is not the beginning of knowledge but an act that goes beyond knowledge; it does not come to an end when knowledge is acquired; it is an attitude that never ceases.

As civilization advances, the sense of wonder declines. Such decline is an alarming symptom of our state of mind. Mankind will not perish for want of information; but only for want of appreciation. The beginning of our happiness lies in the understanding that life without wonder is not worth living. What we lack is not a will to believe but a will to wonder. In radical amazement, the Biblical man faces "the great things and unsearchable, the wondrous things without number" (Job 5:9). He encounters them in space and in time, in nature and in history; not only in the uncommon but also in the common...

We are trained in maintaining our sense of wonder by uttering a prayer before the enjoyment of food. Each time we are about to drink a glass of water, we remind ourselves of the eternal mystery of creation...

Wishing to eat bread or fruit, to enjoy a pleasant fragrance or a cup of wine; on tasting fruit in season for the first time; on seeing a rainbow, or the ocean; on noticing trees when they blossom; on meeting a Sage in Torah or in secular learning; on hearing good or bad tidings - we are taught to invoke His great name and our awareness of Him. Even on performing a physiological function, we say "Blessed be You...who heals all flesh and does wonders..."

("God in Search of Man" by Abraham Joshua Heschel, 1955)

According to this, blessings aren't said in order to please God, but rather in order to invite the Divine to be a part of our daily experience. This is relevant especially when for many the image that tends to come to mind when thinking of God is of a distant, long-bearded wizard sitting up in the sky, expecting us to obey his strange orders, giving out rewards and punishing our failures. On the contrary, one of the ways of viewing God in Jewish tradition is expressed by the name "Hamakom," which means "The Place." In other words, God is viewed as the constant facilitator of our being, the "place" in which life unfolds. In this sense, blessings are considered to be a way of awakening our consciousness to a life that is full of purpose, sensation and wonder.

*"...This is one of the goals of the Jewish way of living: to experience commonplace deeds as spiritual adventures, to feel the hidden love and wisdom in all things."
(Abraham Joshua Heschel)*



THE SEVEN SPECIES

Today, we start our feast with the seven species, which are the fruits that the Land of Israel is famous for.

"For Hashem is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks, fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and grapevines and figs and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and date honey..."

(Dvarim 8:7-8)

Our Tu B'Shvat seder (a similar concept as the Pesach seder that creates an order around the celebration) links us with the Land of Israel. Our ancestors treasured its stones and soil; how much more so its trees and fruit. Passover marks the Journey; Tu B'Shvat celebrates the Arrival. Passover is about yearning for the Land of Israel; Tu B'Shvat is the appreciation of it.

Wheat and Barley

Introduction

Wheat and barley in Jewish tradition are considered the staples of the daily diet: wheat for humans, and barley for our animals. In Israel, barley ripens earlier than wheat, and this perhaps reflects the Jewish tradition of sensitivity to animals: Jewish law forbids us to eat until we have fed our animals.

Also, wheat products represent our human ability to change and improve. In Jewish tradition, activism is not considered a value on its own. Any action is considered an expression of our inner mindset. What do our actions express? In order to awaken this existential question, before eating bread, there is a ritual called *Netilat Yadayim*, which literally means elevating of the hands. We wash our hands and then raise them in front of our face while reciting the blessing, in order to remind ourselves that our actions (hands) have to be rooted in our mindfulness and attention (face).

Spiritual Insights

According to Jewish spiritual tradition, the word "Adam" (Human) has two origins. Adam – taken from Adama (In Hebrew: the soil), and Adam that comes from "Adame Laelyon" (In Hebrew: likened to the Divine). Those two sides are described in the Kabbalistic and Hassidic literature as two souls, the Divine and the Animal. The first soul wishes to contribute, to unify and to relate to everything in a mindset of unconditional love; while the second one wants to take, to separate and to measure everything according to what it can gain out of it. There is always a struggle between the two, because their intentions are opposite. Spiritual and personal growth starts when we decide to "ride" our animal soul, and not to let it ride us; to live our life from our pure-self point of view, and then to use our selfish-self as a tool to help us succeed. However, after we make this decision, feeding the animal side should come first. Like any good artist, we are encouraged to maintain our tools carefully.

Chevruta

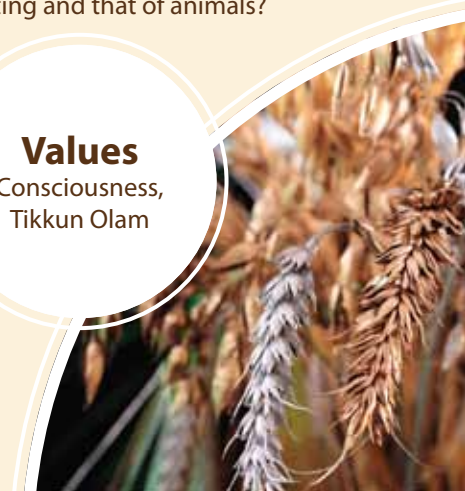
1. Rabbi Yehuda says: the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was wheat, since a child does not know how to call 'father' and 'mother' until it has had a taste of grain. (Talmud Berachot 40a)
2. Once the wicked Roman ruler Tinius Rufus asked Rabbi Akiva: "Whose deeds are more fine, God's or humans'?" Rabbi Akiva answered: "Humans." He responded: "Can humans make heaven and earth?" Rabbi Akiva answered: "Don't pick an example that is beyond human's ability to create; take an example that relates more directly to humans." Rufus asked: "Why do you practice circumcision?" Rabbi Akiva answered: "I knew that this is really what you are asking about, that's why I told you that human deeds are finer." And he brought him some stalks of wheat and some cakes. Rabbi Akiva noted that stalks are products of God's doing, whereas cakes are the product of humans. Rabbi Akiva asked: "Aren't the cakes finer than the stalks of wheat?" (Midrash Tanhuma, Tazria)
3. The final action has its roots within the first thought. (Lecha Dodi, Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, Tzfat 16th century)

Questions for Discussion:

1. In your opinion, why did Source 1 associate wheat with human knowledge and communication?
2. What do you believe is the purpose of mankind in the world? Is it possible for us to be partners in creation? If so, how?
3. Relating to Source 3, do you believe mindfulness is always necessary prior to actions? In which situations might it not be?
4. In your opinion, what is the difference between the human way of acting and that of animals?

Values

Consciousness,
Tikkun Olam



Olives

Introduction

Our ancestors used olives mainly for olive oil, which was considered the perfect oil for lighting candles. The oil, however, is not easily extracted from the fruit. In order to make oil, one must crush and then press the olives. It is a difficult and slow process but worth the effort.

The olive tree can live a life of hundreds and even thousands of years, and give fruit the entire time. One of the reasons for this vitality is the fact that every olive tree is actually not a single tree but a family. The new shoots constantly rise from the roots and join the mother tree, constantly helping it to grow wider and providing it with a unique external appearance. Over time, the mother tree dies, but the "family tree" continues to live and prosper.

Spiritual Insights

"Deep inside my heart I've got this everlasting light," says a song we sing at Livnot, but it is not always so easy to be in touch with this light. We are constantly urged to fill someone else's expectations of us and to look for guidance outside of ourselves. We are encouraged to seek the approval of our parents, teachers, society, and everyone around us. Even the Divine is usually taught to be some kind of external Judge we are supposed to fear who is constantly weighing our actions and inactions. Yet the Jewish perception of the Divine clearly goes beyond this line of thought. Jewish spirituality exposes various ways to awaken our inner light, wisdom and happiness, which is a direct extension of the Divine consciousness that is within us. In Hebrew we call it neshama, the soul. That's our hidden treasure. The olive oil, mostly used for light in the past, symbolizes our striving to connect to our soul, and also the desire to shine its light and ideas out in an understandable and accessible way.



Chevruta

1. Your children will be like olive shoots around your table (Psalms 128-3)
2. Rav Nachman and Rabbi Yitzchak were eating together. After the main course, Rabbi Yitzchak said in the name of Rabbi Yohanan: Yaakov, our forefather, didn't die. Rav Nachman asked – but the Torah says he was mourned, embalmed, and buried! Rabbi Yitzchak answered: I learn it from the passage "Don't be afraid, Yaakov my servant...for I will redeem you from afar and your descendants from a distant land (Jeremiah 30:10)." This means that as far as his descendants are alive, he is considered alive as well. (Talmud Taanit 5b)
3. And you will command the children of Israel, and they will take pure olive oil crushed for lighting, to constantly light a lamp [in the Temple]. (Shmot 27:20)
4. Just as the olive has to be crushed and beaten in order to produce the finest olive oil; so too the people of Israel. Their finest side comes out only after they go through much crushing and agony." (Talmud Menachot 53b)

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why do you think our ancestors chose meal times, as expressed in sources 1 and 2, to pass over the values and wisdom from one generation to another, as opposed to other times?
2. What in your opinion is the best way to be connected to the continuity of our people's heritage without losing our personal uniqueness?
3. What in your opinion is the reason why our best is revealed only after hardships? Can you think of a time when you experienced this?
4. Do we have to wait to be "crushed?" What do you think can be done in order to gain the same effect without necessarily going through such tribulations?

Values

Process,
Challenge,
Continuity

Dates

Introduction

Palm trees attracted the curiosity and praises of our Sages for having a variety of utilities. This inspired them to claim the palm as a symbol of sustainability and a waste-free lifestyle. Every part of the tree is useful and has a purpose (see below). Just as in our private lives we are encouraged not to waste our resources; a similar idea is incorporated on a communal level. Different people have different abilities and traits, and building a community often requires a certain diversity in which every member contributes his or her special color to the communal bouquet.

Another important Jewish value can be extracted from the palm tree – inclusiveness. One who achieves a certain level of completeness and enlightenment is expected to become an inspiration and share their drive towards improvement with others.

Spiritual Insights

When I shake my friend's hand, the hand itself is not the issue. When I kiss my children on their forehead, I am not looking for a pleasant physical feeling. There is something beyond these actions, some kind of essence, that is not defined by those details but rather channeled by them. This essence is a quality called "Yesod" meaning foundation. It is the quality that best represents the Tzadik, someone who constantly reaches beyond the surface and reaches the true intention of the action. Sometimes we have a tendency to forget this intention inside ourselves, trapped in a whirlpool of mundane performances. We may find ourselves trying to measure our happiness by the amount of achieved objects or goals, which may lead us deeper and deeper into the confusing ocean of contradicting details. Many different Jewish practices constantly remind us to reconnect to the "why's" behind what we do.



Chevruta

1. The palm tree has nothing wasted from it: the dates are for eating, the young unopened branches are for the lulav (fulfilling the commandment of Four Species on Sukkot), the fibers around the trunk are used to make rope, the empty date cluster stems are used to make sieves, the many branches are used to make a roof for houses. Similarly, the people of Israel have no person wasted. (Midrash Breshit Rabbah 4)
2. The righteous one flourishes like the palm; as a cedar in Lebanon he grows. (Psalms 92:13)
3. There are two types of righteous people; both of them are really full of goodness. But one is righteous on his own, not sharing his light with others. This type is likened to a cedar that grows for its own sake. The second one is likened to a palm tree that flourishes; which means that he bears fruit, inspires others to improve and enhances the good in the world. (Baal Shem Tov, Honest Behavior, p. 109)
4. The Rabbi of Kotzk once said that some Tzadikim (righteous people) are Tzadikim in a coat. They work to improve their character traits, as one who buys a coat during a cold season. They are warm, but everyone around stays cold. But some Tzadikim build a fire that warms up everyone around them. (Seeyakh Sarfei Kodesh on the value of Tzadik, p. 10)

Questions for Discussion:

1. Source 1 mentions that there is no unworthy person. If so, why in your opinion do some people still feel wasted?
2. What is a trait that may prevent people from finding their place and role in a community?
3. How would you suggest educating people to find their calling?
4. Do you think there is ever a time where people should be like a cedar rather than a palm tree?

Values:

Sustainability,
Inclusiveness



Grapes & Wine

Introduction

Jewish sources often refer to the People of Israel as a grapevine - full of beauty, fruitfulness, and diversity. All parts of the grapevine are vital to its entire existence.

Wine, as one of the main products of grapes, is central to many aspects of Jewish celebration despite its potential for destruction. Judaism has never been frightened by the complexity of life. Jews have been using wine as a part of almost every spiritual practice and holiday, like Shabbat, Passover, or just a friendly DMC (Deep Meaningful Conversation). When our Sages wanted to mention positive drinking, they used the term "getting perfumed", as if to say – like a perfume's purpose is to spread the good smell, the intention of drinking is meant to expose the good inside ourselves in a non-judgmental, positive atmosphere. Be careful not to get wasted.

Spiritual Insights

A famous Jewish concept is that overall oneness is a consensus reality, and that separation and diversity are beautiful tools to highlight this oneness. The purpose of many Jewish practices is to experience this oneness and to feel a part of it. Therefore in Jewish culture and spirituality, the individual and the community need not clash, and oneness has never meant sameness. More so, each individual not only has the opportunity, but is even encouraged to be different and special, and not just for the sake of one's personal growth. An individual approach in education (חנוך לנער על פי דרכו – educate the child according to his/her own path, King Solomon's Proverbs 22:6) was seen as the best way to build a strong community in which everyone contributes by being the best version of themselves.

Chevruta

1. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: The Jewish people are likened to a grapevine. Its branches are the householders. The grape clusters are the Torah scholars. The leaves are the plain people (the country folk). The tendrils are the empty ones of Israel. That is why the Sages of the Land of Israel sent a request to Babylon: The grape clusters should pray and ask for mercy on the leaves, for without the leaves – the grape clusters will not survive. (Talmud Hullin 92a)
2. The words for "wine" and "secret" have the same numerical value, meaning "when wine enters, a secret is revealed." (Talmud Sanhedrin 38a)
3. Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira held their Purim feast together, and became drunk. Rabbah stood up and slaughtered Rabbi Zeira. The next day Rabbah pleaded for Divine mercy, and brought Rabbi Zeira back to life. The next year, Rabbah said to Rabbi Zeira, "Come, let us have the Purim feast together again!" Rabbi Zeira replied: Miracles don't happen every day. (Talmud Megillah 7b)
4. Haman (the villain from Purim) spoke disparagingly about us that we are a spread-out and divided people. So, every year on Purim, we prove him wrong by coming together in unity. That's why there is an obligation on this day to get "perfumed" by wine, because our Sages say "praised is a sip of alcohol for bringing people's hearts closer." (Rabbi Yitzchak of Vorka)

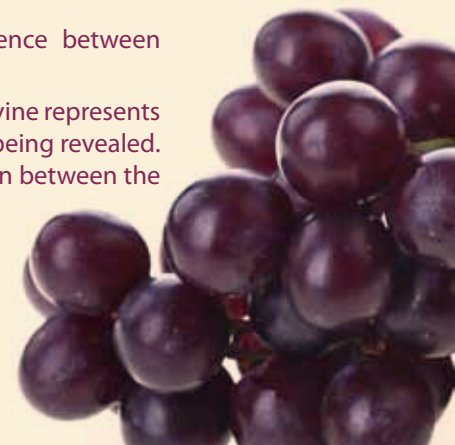
Questions for Discussion:

1. The grapevine "community" is described as a combination of branches, leaves, grape clusters and tendrils. What role do you take in your community?
2. What is your definition of the "empty ones of Israel?" Why are they likened to tendrils?
3. What in your opinion is the difference between positive and negative drinking?
4. According to these sources, the grapevine represents diversity in communities and secrets being revealed. What in your opinion is the connection between the two?



Values:

Community,
Diversity,
Openness



Figs

Introduction

Since the fig is physically and botanically so different from all other fruits, its physical properties are often stressed in Jewish sources. It is a symbol of the Torah and the process of Jewish education.



Spiritual Insights

In Jewish spirituality, Understanding and Wisdom are two opposite spiritual powers that constantly complement each other. In our body they are represented by the left and right hemispheres of our brain. Just as each fig ripens in its own time, so too does Understanding develop over time. Understanding is compared to our ability to hear. It is impossible to hear all the melody at once - the beauty of music is in its process, in the development, note by note. Binah (understanding) has the same root as bonah (building). Certain things just need to be built; they cannot be found or discovered. Each detail has to be accurate, and ought to be built upon the previous one. This spiritual power needs investment, patience and concentration. The way our Sages suggested to train our Binah is first to set up goals that fit our abilities, which has to be done by Wisdom (see pomegranate). After the goal is set, we use the left side of our minds in order to plan carefully all the details of the process and then to work persistently until the goal is achieved. Analyzing the process is vital, but only once the action is finished. Constant doubt or review on the way to the goal may ruin the flow of the experience and our dedication to it; unless it is done on certain points that were planned beforehand.

30

Chevruta

1. And the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and the tree was desirable to make one wise; so she took of its fruit, and she ate, and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves and made themselves girdles (Breshit 3:6-7)
2. The fig was the tree they sinned by, and they tried to fix their sin by using what caused them to fail. (Rashi on Breshit 3:7)
3. Why is the Torah likened to a fig? All the fruits have something inedible in them: dates have pits, grapes have seeds, pomegranates have rinds, but the fig is good to eat in its entirety. Likewise, all the words of the Torah have nothing worthless in them. (Yalkut Shimoni 4)
4. Why are the words of the Torah likened to the fig tree? Just like this fig tree, in which the more one searches, the more figs one finds, so are the words of the Torah - the more one studies them, the more wisdom one finds in them. (Talmud Eruvin 54a)

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think is the purpose of trying to fix something by using the source of its failure?
2. What is the connection between the first three sources?
3. What is the importance of being in a process?
4. What are the dangers of things being too instant in our modern day worlds? What are the benefits?

Values

Patience,
Wholeness,
Education

31



Pomegranate

Introduction

When Jews wanted to appraise beauty, the pomegranate was their measuring stick. The pomegranate's unique and aesthetic shape, along with its ruby-red color, has given it a special place in Jewish literature and art. The pomegranate also symbolizes the abundance of good things, because of its numerous seeds, which are so carefully arranged in neat rows inside the fruit. Throughout the generations, this fruit's likeness also decorated the staves of the Torah scrolls and served as an artistic motif in synagogues, on coins and in mosaic floors. Since it's the only one of the seven species with an inedible rind, the pomegranate also became a symbol for wisdom and the creative ability to see the hidden.

Spiritual Insights

As mentioned previously, Wisdom and Understanding are two opposite spiritual powers that constantly complement each other. According to the Wisdom point of view, everything we need already exists. Sometimes we just don't see what it is or where it is hidden. Wisdom is the ability to open our eyes and find what is in front of us, just like Rabbi Meir found the pomegranate (see Chevruta). Dealing with small details may block our wisdom, just as our global vision can be blocked while we look too closely at a certain object. If we are expecting guests, we should try not to prejudge where they will come from or what they are going to look like. Some of the suggested ways to acquire wisdom is practicing flexibility of perception, humility and faith.



32

Chevruta

1. Your cheeks are an orchard of pomegranates... Your temple is like a glimpse of a pomegranate behind your braid... Let us go early to the vineyards, let us see if the grapevine has flowered, if its blossoms have opened, if the pomegranates are in bloom... I would give you spiced wine to drink, the fresh juice of pomegranates... (Song of Songs)
2. He who wishes to see the beauty of Rav Yohanan should bring a shining silver cup and fill it with the seeds of a red pomegranate and crown it entirely with a wreath of red roses on its brim and place it between sunlight and shade; that brilliance is like the beauty of Rav Yohanan. (Talmud Baba Metziah 84)
3. Rabbi Meir found a pomegranate; he ate the inside and threw away the rind. (Talmud Hagiga 27)
4. Rabbi Akha, the son of Rabbi Khanina said: God knows that no one is equal to Rabbi Meir in his generation. So why was his opinion not accepted in the Halakha (the Jewish law, or literally, the way to go)? Because his friends could not see all the depth of his mind... Why was he called Rabbi Meir? For he enlightens wise people's eyes. (Talmud Eruvin 13b)
5. Even the emptiest people of Israel are full of good deeds as a pomegranate is of seeds. (Talmud Eruvin 19a)

Questions for Discussion

1. According to the different sources - is beauty external, internal, or something else?
2. In source 3 how do you understand Rabbi Meir's actions as describing his character?
3. If Rabbi Meir was so wise, why was his advice not accepted in practice? Is there a value in following what we don't fully understand?
4. Please explain the meaning of the "emptiest people of Israel." How can they be empty, if they are full of good deeds as a pomegranate is of seeds?
5. As opposed to the fig, the pomegranate symbolizes a hidden treasure which instantly appears once it is found. What hidden treasures are there in your lives? Why don't we always see them?

Values

Hidden Attributes,
Wisdom,
Beauty



33

ADDITIONAL FRUITS

All the plants of the field (Breshit 2)

In a play on words (שיח - siach, meaning plant, can also be read as "conversing"), our Sages understand the above line from Breshit in the following way:

It is as if, all of the trees converse this with that. It is as if, all the trees converse with all creatures. (Breshit Raba 2:13)

Carob

Introduction

The Hebrew name of the carob – Charuv – has a few different meanings, all of which are related to lack and destruction. For this reason, the carob was proclaimed a symbol of hardship and settling for less. However, in Jewish tradition, deprivation and struggles are steps to climb on and to grow from. The carob also symbolizes the resilience of the Jewish people through the countless tragedies they have experienced, and the secret of their immortality. Some believe that this resilience stems from a connection to an infinite source of unconditional love, enabling us to invest in something just because we believe it is good, even if we will never bear the fruit of our effort.

Spiritual Insights

In a world full of materialism and over-indulgence, it is hard to remember that there is a positive aspect to hardship. Sometimes when things break down, hardship serves as a red flag, telling us that the essence of our existence was out-of-tune all along. According to Jewish spirituality, we are meant to practice seeing every experience as an opportunity to grow. Sometimes we want to create and to make the world better, but the energy for our effort doesn't come from the right source. One cannot expect to make peace only because of the fear of war, or to build strong relationships out of the fear of being alone. So, we find ourselves in an endless struggle. Instead of paying attention to the source, too many times we try quieting the symptoms. In this case, we need to go through a process of deprivation, where all our tools are broken or abandoned, in order to connect our roots back to the groundwater.

36



37



1. Rav Judah said in the name of Rav: Every day a Heavenly Voice is heard declaring: The whole world draws its sustenance because [of the merit] of Hanina my son, and Hanina my son suffices himself with a kab (approx. 2 kg) of carob from one Sabbath eve to another. (Talmud, Taanit 24b)
2. After the world was created, Adam was given a task – to give names to every being, as it says "and He brought [it] to Adam to see what he would call it, and whatever Adam called each living thing, that was its name." (Breshit 2:19) ...When Adam approached the carob tree, he didn't know how to define its essence and identity. On the one hand, the carob is one of the famous trees of the Land of Israel, on the other hand it was not mentioned as one of the "seven species." Adam watched its fruit and paid attention that it looks like a sword (Hebrew: Cherev), and called it Charuv. The carob began shuddering immediately and argued: "Why is my name to forever remind people of a sword and destruction?" God tried to appease the carob tree: "Later on, great righteous people will be sufficed by you from one Sabbath eve to another!" But this was a poor answer for the carob. "When my sons will be in the Diaspora exiled from their land, they will start a tradition to bless and eat carobs on Tu B'Shvat!" God continued, but the carob was still not appeased. "Please be comforted by the fact that two great Tzadikim will be sufficed by your fruits for years [while hiding in a cave]. Also, the tree they will eat from will receive a very special blessing: during all the long years of exile when The Land of Israel is going to be destroyed, this carob will exist and remain alive, and the Jewish community will always exist beside it. When the children of Israel will gather back to the Holy Land, the inhabitants of the Galilee will come on Tu B'Shvat to the village of Pekiin and celebrate the Tree's New Year under this Carob." Immediately the carob was comforted by those words. (Tehila Ledavid 236)
3. Rabbi Elazar, the son of Rabbi Shimon said: Carob and sycamore roots spread down to the groundwater. (Midrash Rabbah 13:17)
4. One day as Honi was walking on the road, he saw an old man planting a carob tree. Honi asked him: "How long does it take until the carob tree bears fruit?" The man answered: "seventy years." Honi said: "Is it so obvious to you that you are going to live another seventy years (and eat from your effort)?" The man said to him: "I found this world with carobs that my ancestors planted for me; I will plant too for my descendants."

Questions for Discussion:

1. According to the sources, what is the secret of the carob's immortality? How does this relate to the Jewish people?
2. What lesson can be learned from Rabbi Hanina's lifestyle? How does the carob represent that value?
3. In source 3, why do you think the carob was comforted only by the last answer and not by the two previous ones?
4. What do the carob tree and the values it represents have to do specifically with Tu B'Shvat?
5. What motivates the old man to plant a carob tree? Speaking metaphorically, what "carob trees" do you want to plant in this world?

Values

Humility,
Resilience,
Selflessness



Apple

Introduction

The apple tree has a very special quality - its fruits flourish before its leaves bud. Our Sages, paying attention to this fact, compared an apple to the relationship between experiential and intellectual learning. It also became a symbol of the trust and sweetness of true relationships and unconditional love.

Spiritual Insights

Learning from the apple, we can find two main characteristics of a relationship based on unconditional love. First is the will to fulfill our love's desire, and second is the will to understand their inner being. This specific order is precise, for it expresses real trust, relevance and belonging. In our personal lives, we are encouraged to choose our partners and occupations in the same way. Our purpose in life is what both intrigues us the most and what we can fully invest ourselves in, with or without expecting to receive measurable benefits.

Chevruta

1. As an apple tree amongst the trees of the forest, so is my beloved amongst the sons; in his shade I delighted and sat, and his fruit was sweet to my palate. (Song of Songs 2:3)
2. R. Hama son of R. Hanina said: What is meant by "As the apple tree amongst the trees of the forest, so is my beloved amongst the sons?" : Why were the Israelites compared to an apple tree? To teach you: just as the fruit of the apple tree precedes its leaves, so did the Israelites give precedence to "we will do" over "we will listen." (Talmud Shabbat 88a-b)
3. "...They gave precedence to "we will do" over "we will listen," because through the power of the deed itself they manage to hear the inner voice that is hidden in it. They connected themselves to the experience of the commandments because of their trust..." (Sfat Emet, Akhrei Mot 5747)

Question for Discussion:

1. Why would the people of Israel choose to agree to act upon something they did not yet understand? Isn't that an illogical contract to sign?
2. When in your life would you agree to "take a leap of faith" and do what you are asked to, even before understanding the purpose? When would you not agree?
3. In your opinion, what is the difference between obedience and trust in a relationship?
4. What is the value of learning through experience? In your opinion, in which situations is it impossible to understand a concept without experience?

Values

Experience,
Trust,
Action

Almond

Introduction

Trees in Israel bloom in the spring, while their fruits ripen in the summer. One tree's timing differs from all the rest - the almond tree. Despite the more common "blooming strategy" in Israel, which is to bloom with all the other trees, when the sun is shining, the ground still provides moisture, and most importantly – the pollinating bugs are abundant, the almond tree decided to be special. By blooming in the middle of the winter, even if the insects are rare, the almond tree encounters no competition and earns its pollination by its uniqueness. The root word of "shakked" (almond) in Hebrew refers to being devoted, immediate and intense. A studious and diligent learner is called a "shakdan." In Jeremiah, a person who implements his ideas and desires is termed "shokked." The almond tree, which blooms long before the other trees in the Land of Israel, indeed merits its name.



Spiritual Insights

In the world of Jewish spirituality, the fire element represents the unique ability to consciously strive towards completeness and perfection. For the fire, the journey is not important, only the target. There is something special in the human race that constantly strives to progress and achieve. The almond's fiery attributes, burning in our hearts, are a symbol of life and movement, excellency and leadership. When used in a selfish way, our striving for perfection can become a source of arrogance and anger, leaving its owner lonely and bitter. One of the ways suggested to keep our fire in balance is to live a life of meaning and purpose, converting arrogance to joy. This enables us to focus on our role in the world and to be thankful for all the amazing tools we were given for this mission.

Chevruta:

1. So Israel, their father, said to them, "If so, then do this: take some of the chosen products of the land in your vessels, and take them down to the man as a gift, a little balm and a little honey, wax and lotus, pistachios and almonds. (Breshit 43:11)
2. [While being in a prophetic state], the word of the Lord came to me, saying: What do you see, Jeremiah? And I said, "I see a rod of an almond tree (shakked)." And the Lord said to me: You have seen well, for I hasten (shokked) My word to accomplish it. (Jeremiah 1:11-12)
3. What use can be made of large bitter almonds? — R. Johanan answered: They can surely be sweetened by [roasting in] the fire! (Talmud Hullin 25b)

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the value in being unique? Is there a value in following the common mass? In your life, when would you prefer one over the other?
2. What do you think is the purpose of competition? Is it necessary for leadership?
3. When in your opinion can "immediate and intense" actions be helpful? When can they be destructive?
4. What is the meaning of the "culinary discussion" in Source 3? Why would our sages choose to mention this in the Talmud?
5. Like an almond, some unique people have a tendency to be bitter. What in your opinion is the source of this feeling? How can we avoid this bitterness without losing our uniqueness?

Values

Uniqueness,
Devotion,
Leadership



Etrog (Citron)

Introduction

The etrog is widely known in the Jewish world for being one of the four species traditionally held during the Sukkot Holiday, when the rainy season is just about to start. This is considered to be the perfect time to pray for fulfilment and realization - both on a personal and on a global level - for all the seeds planted to be absorbed by the land, watered by the rain and welcomed into the world in order to continue the cycle of life. Due to its name and special qualities, the etrog was seen by our Sages as a symbol of magnificence and fulfillment. Some even considered it to have mystical abilities. Women who are having trouble conceiving are suggested to take a bite of the tip of an etrog after the end of Sukkot as a spiritual practice meant to awaken their own fertility. Additionally, etrog jam is given to women who are struggling to give birth in order to ease this beautiful but sometimes difficult process.

Spiritual Insights

One of the explanations given by the Talmud for the name of the etrog as "Hadar" is that it is similar to the Greek word "hydro", meaning water. In the world of Jewish spirituality, the water element represents our ability to be compassionate towards others. The water's power is to hug, comfort and encourage by acceptance. When we see someone acting in a way that is wrong, our water element will remind us that even if the situation or action is to be judged, we should never judge the essence of the person in front of us. Humans are considered to be good at their core, and our love towards others should not be measured by their success or failure. When out of balance, the water element may push us to become addicted to comfort and indulgence. We may find ourselves strung out on food, money, sexuality, etc. When in tune, the water element raises our ability to sense the internal beauty and wholeness of every creature and makes us strive to constantly reveal it so others may see it too.

Chevruta

1. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day [of Sukkot], the fruit of the Hadar [Hebrew meaning both magnificent and citron] tree, tightly bound branches of date palms, the branch of a braided [myrtle] tree, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for a seven day period. (Vayikra 23:40)
2. Know that the lulav (palm) is similar to a man's spine and the hadas (myrtle) is similar to eyes. The arava (willow) is similar to lips and the etrog (citron) is similar to a heart. King David said, "There is no other part of the body that is more important than these. They are comparable to the whole body. (Tanhuma Emor 19)
3. The etrog (citron fruit) has a good taste as well as a good smell and likewise are the People of Israel. There are some amongst them that have learning as well as good deeds. (Vayikra Rabba 30:12)
4. The three myrtle branches imply the three patriarchs. Moses and Aaron are two willow branches. Joseph is a date palm - lulav, our heart's delight. King David is an etrog, a complete bride. (Sukka ve Lulav, Kabbalistic Sephardic song)

Questions for Discussion:

1. In source 2, it seems like our Sages made analogies between the four species and human organs according to their similar physical shape. Do you think there is deeper connection between the etrog and the heart? If yes, what is it?
2. In your opinion, what is the connection between splendor, completion, fertility, one's heart and King David?
3. If an etrog was your coach, how would it suggest you accomplish your goals and fulfill your dreams? In your life, what prevents you from fulfilling your dreams?

Values
Splendor,
Realization

TU B'SHVAT SONGS

Hashkediya Porachat (The Almond Tree Is Blooming)

Hash'kediya porachat
veshemesh paz
zorachat,
tziporim merosh kol gag
mevarsrot et bo hachag.

The almond tree is
blooming and the
golden sun is shining,
birds atop each roof
welcome (bless) the
arrival of the Festival.

הַשְּׂקֵדִיָּה פּוֹרַחַת,
וְשֵׁמֶשׁ פָּז זֹרַחַת.
צִפּוֹרִים מֵרֹאשׁ כָּל גַּג
מְבַשְּׂרוֹת אֶת בּוֹא הַחָג.

Tu B'Shvat hig'i'a
chag la'ilanot.
Tu B'Shvat hig'i'a
chag la'ilanot.

Tu b'shvat has arrived
(it's) the Festival of trees.
Tu B'Shvat has arrived
(it's) the Festival of trees.

ט"ו בְּשֶׁבֶט הַגִּיעַ -
חַג הָאֵילָנוֹת!
ט"ו בְּשֶׁבֶט הַגִּיעַ -
חַג הָאֵילָנוֹת.

Ha'aretz meshava'at
higi'ah et lata'at
kol echad yikach po etz
be'atim nitze chotzet.

The land is crying out
the time of planting
has arrived each person
shall take a tree we'll
stride out with spades.

הָאָרֶץ מְשֻׁעֵת:
הַגִּיעָה עַת לְטַעַת!
כָּל אֶחָד יִטַּע פֶּה עֵץ,
בְּאַתִּים נִצָּא חוֹצֵץ:

Tu B'Shvat hig'i'a...

Tu B'Shvat has arrived...

ט"ו בְּשֶׁבֶט הַגִּיעַ...

Nita kol har va'geva
Midan ve'ad be'er sheva
Ve'artzenu shuv nirash-
Eretz zeit yitzhar u'dvash

We shall plant every
mountain and hill, from
Dan to Be'er Sheva, and
our land we shall settle
again - the land of olives,
wine and honey

נִטַּע כָּל הַר וְגִבְעָה,
מִדָּן וְעַד בְּעַר-שֵׁבַע:
וְאֶרְצֵנוּ שׁוּב נִירַשׁ -
אֶרֶץ זֵית וְיֵצְהָר וְדִבְשׁ.

Tu B'Shvat hig'i'a...

Tu B'Shvat has arrived...

ט"ו בְּשֶׁבֶט הַגִּיעַ...

Shirat Ha'Asavim (Song of the Field)

Da lekha,
shekol ro'eih ve ro'eih
yeish lo nigun
meyuchad mishelo.

Know that each and
every shepherd has his
own melody.

דַּע לָךְ
שֶׁכָּל רוֹעֵה וְרוֹעֵה
יֵשׁ לוֹ נִגּוּן מִיּוֹחַד מִשְׁלוֹ

Da lekha,
shekol eisev va'eisev
yeish lo shirah
meyuchedet mishelo.

Know that each and
every blade of grass has
its own song.

דַּע לָךְ
שֶׁכָּל עֵשֶׂב וְעֵשֶׂב
יֵשׁ לוֹ שִׁירָה מִיּוֹחַדֵת מִשְׁלוֹ

Umishirat ha'asavim
na'aseh nigun shel
ro'eih.

And from the song of
the grass comes the
melody of the Sheperd.
How beautiful, how
beautiful and pleasant
it is to hear their song.

וּמִשִּׁירַת הָעֵשְׂבִים
נִעֲשֶׂה נִגּוּן שֶׁל רוֹעֵה
כַּמָּה יָפֶה
כַּמָּה יָפֶה וְנֹאֶה
כִּשְׁשׁוּמְעִים הַשִּׁירָה שְׁלָהֶם
טוֹב מְאֹד לְהִתְפַּלֵּל בִּיְהִיָּהֶם
וּבְשִׂמְחָה לְעַבְד אֶת ה'
וּמִשִּׁירַת הָעֵשְׂבִים מִתְמַלֵּא
הַלֵּב וּמִשְׂתוֹקֵק

Kamah yafeh, kama
yafeh vena'eih
kesheshom'im hashirah
shelahem.

It's very good to pray
among them and to
serve Hashem in joy.

Tov me'od lehitpaleil
beineihem uvesimchah
la'avod et Hasheim.

And from the song of
the grass the heart is
filled and yearns .

וּכְשֶׁהַלֵּב מִן הַשִּׁירָה מִתְמַלֵּא
וּמִשְׂתוֹקֵק אֶל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל
אוֹר גָּדוֹל אֲזִי נִמְשָׁךְ וְהוֹלֵךְ
מִקְדוּשָׁתָהּ שֶׁל הָאָרֶץ עֲלִיו

Umishirat ha'asavim
mitmalei haleiv,
umishtokeik.

And when the song
causes the heart to fill
and to yearn to the
Land of Israel a great
light is drawn and goes
from the Land's holiness
upon it.

וּמִשִּׁירַת הָעֵשְׂבִים
נִעֲשֶׂה נִגּוּן שֶׁל הַלֵּב.

Ukhshehaleiv, min
hashirah mitmalei
umishtokeik el erets
yisra'eil.

And from the song of
the grass comes the
melody of the heart.

Or gadol azay nimshakh
veholeikh mikkushatah
shel ha'arets alav.

Umishirat ha'asavim,
na'aseh nigun shel
haleiv.



Kach Holchim Hashotlim (Walk of the Planters)

Kach holchim hashotlim
ron balev ve'et bayad
min ha'ir umin hak'far,
min ha'emek, min hahar
bt"u bish'vat, bt"u
bish'vat.

Lamah batem,
hashotlim? nach
hakarka uvatzar
regumot s'viv nech'far
baharim uvamishor bt"u
bish'vat, bt"u bish'vat.

Mah y'he po, hashotlim?
Sh'til yavo bechol
gumah ya'ar ad yif'ros
tzilo al artzeinu agumah
bt"u bish'vat, bt"u
bish'vat.

Thus walk the planters
song in the heart, spade
in hand from the city
and from the village,
from the valley, from the
mountain on Tu B'Shvat,
on Tu B'Shvat.

What has brought you
planters here?
We strike the soil and
the stone, dig the
marshes all around in
the mountain and the
plain on Tu B'Shvat, on
Tu B'Shvat.

What will be here,
planter? A sapling will
fill each hole until it
spreads its shade over
our forlorn land on
Tu B'Shvat, on Tu
B'Shvat.

כָּךְ הוֹלְכִים הַשׁוֹתְלִים:
רֵן בַּלֵּב וְאֵת בַּיָּד,
מִן הָעִיר וּמִן הַכֶּפֶר,
מִן הָעֵמֶק, מִן הַהָר -
בְּט"ו בְּשֶׁבֶט, בְּט"ו בְּשֶׁבֶט.

לָמָּה בָאתֶם, הַשׁוֹתְלִים?
נָךְ בְּקָרְקַע וּבְצַר,
וְגוֹמוֹת סָבִיב נִחְפָּר
בְּהָרִים וּבְמִישׁוֹר -
בְּט"ו בְּשֶׁבֶט, בְּט"ו בְּשֶׁבֶט.

מָה יִהְיֶה פֹה, הַשׁוֹתְלִים?
שְׁתִּיל יָבוֹא בְּכָל גּוֹמָה,
יַעַר עַד יִפְרֹשׂ צֵלוֹ,
עַל אֲרָצֵנוּ עֲגוּמָה -
בְּט"ו בְּשֶׁבֶט, בְּט"ו בְּשֶׁבֶט.

Adama V'Shamayim (Earth and Sky)

Adama V'Shamayim
Chom Ha'Esh, Tzlil
Hama'Im Ani Margish
Zot B'Gufi, B'Ruchi,
B'Nishmati

Love the earth, love the
sky. Heat of fire, rush of
water. I can feel it in my
body, in my spirit, in my
soul

אֲדַמָּה וְשָׁמַיִם חוֹם הָאֵשׁ,
צֵלִיל הַמַּיִם
אֲנִי מִרְגִּישׁ זֹאת בְּגוּפִי,
בְּרוּחִי, בְּנִשְׁמַתִּי

Tzadik Katamar (The Righteous is like a Date Palm)

Tzadik katamar yifrach
(repeat)
Ke'erez bal'vanon yisgeh
(repeat)
She-tulim be-veit
Adonai B'chatsrot
Eloheinu yafri-chu.
Od yenuvun b'seyvah
d'sheinim v'ra-ananim
yih-yu. L'ha-gid ki yashar
Adonai, Tsur v'lo av-
latah bo.

The righteous man shall
flourish like the palm
(tree). He shall thrive
(grow tall) like a cedar in
Lebanon.
Rooted in the house
of Hashem, In the
courtyards of our God
They shall bring forth
fruit in our old age
they'll be ever fresh and
green, Proclaiming that
Hashem is just, my Rock,
in whom there is no
wrong

צַדִּיק כַּתָּמָר יִפְרַח
כְּאֶרֶז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה
שְׁתִּלִּים כְּבַיִת אֶ-דָּנִי
בְּחִצְרוֹת אֶ-לֹהֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ
עוֹד יִנְבוֹנוּ כְּשִׁיבָה
דְּשָׁנִים וְרַעֲבָנִים יִהְיוּ
לְהַגִּיד כִּי-יֵשֶׁר אֶ-דָּנִי
צוּרִי וְלֹא-עוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ

Deep Inside My Heart

Deep inside my heart I've got this everlasting light
It's shining like the sun, it radiates on everyone
And the more that I give - the more I've got to give
It's the way that I live; it's what I'm living for

Eretz Zavot Chalav (A Land of Milk and Honey)

Eretz zavot chalav,
chalav u-d'vash X2

A land flowing with milk
and honey X2

אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ X2



BLESSINGS

As mentioned above in R. Heschel's essay on *Living a Life of Radical Amazement*, Judaism habituates us to be sensitive to the small miracles and gifts that we are blessed with daily. It does this through blessings. Asking us to take a moment, consciously appreciate the item or act and then turn that appreciation into a physical statement. Below are a series of blessings based on Jewish tradition.

Blessings for Food

For Bread:

This blessing is said first and includes all other food eaten as part of the meal

Baruch atah Adonai, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam Hamotzi lechem min haaretz.	Blessed are You, Hashem our God, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ
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For Grains:

This blessing is for grains that are not bread - Cakes, Pasta, Crackers, etc.

Baruch atah Adonai, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei minei mezonot.	Blessed are you, Hashem our God, King of the Universe, Who creates various kinds of grains.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיְּדֵי מִזְוֹנוֹת
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For Wine:

Baruch atah Adonai, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri hagafen.	Blessed are You, Hashem our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן
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For Fruit:

Baruch atah Adonai, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri ha-aitz.	Blessed are You, Hashem our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ
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For Vegetables:

Baruch atah Adonai, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri ha-adamah.	Blessed are You, Hashem our God, King of the Universe who creates the fruit of the earth	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה
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Shehakol - Anything Else:

This category includes fish, meat, dairy products, eggs, drinks (besides wine), processed food and more

Baruch atah Adonai, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam shehakol nihiyah bed'varo.	Blessed are You, Hashem our God, King of the Universe, by Whose word all things came to be.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבְּרוֹ
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Blessings on Sensations & Experiences

Whenever something exciting happens (new purchases, food and experiences, special holidays, good personal news and more):

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, she'heheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higi'anu la'z'man ha'ze.	Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזַמְנו הַזֶּה
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Whenever enjoying something that is also good for others (good news, shared purchases, etc.):

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, hatov ve'hameitiv	Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, King of the Universe, who is good and does good.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַטוֹב וְהַמֵּיטִיב
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On seeing an exceptionally beautiful person, animal or plant:

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, shekahha lo beolamo.	Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, King of the Universe, Who has this in His universe.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁכָּכָה לוֹ בְּעוֹלָמוֹ
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On seeing an outstanding secular scholar:

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam shenatan mekhokhmato levasar vadam.	Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, King of the Universe, Who has given of his wisdom to flesh and blood.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁנָּתַן מִחֻכְמָתוֹ לְבָשָׂר וְדָם
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On seeing an outstanding Torah scholar:

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam shekhalak mekhokhmato leyireav	Blessed are You, HaShem, our God, King of the Universe, Who has shared his wisdom with those who revere Him.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁחָלַק מִחֻכְמָתוֹ לְיֹרְאָיו
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On seeing lightning, a comet or shooting star, exceptionally tall mountains, wide rivers or other natural wonders:

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, oseh ma'aseh bereshit	Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the Universe, Who makes the act of Creation.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, עוֹשֵׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית
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On experiencing earthquake or hearing thunder:

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, shekokho ugevurato male olam	Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the Universe, Whose power and might pervade the world.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁכֹּחוֹ וְגִבּוֹרָתוֹ מְלֵא עוֹלָם
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On seeing an ocean:

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam sheh-a-sah et ha-yam ha-gadol.	Blessed are you, Hashem, our God, Ruler of the Universe, who made the great sea.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה אֶת הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל
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On seeing a rainbow:

Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, zokher haberit v'neeman bivrito v'kayam b'maamaro	Blessed are You, Hashem, our God, King of the Universe, Who remembers the covenant, is trustworthy in His covenant and fulfils His word.	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, זוֹכֵר הַבְּרִית וְנֹאֲמָן בְּבְרִיתוֹ וְקִיָּם בְּמַאֲמָרוֹ
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AFTERWORD

As our chevre (alumni) are aware, at Livnot it is not about getting from point A to point B, although it is nice to finally arrive at your destination. The program, like life, is about the journey, the growth during and contributions made after, never end.

We created this handbook as a tool for anyone who wants to celebrate Tu B'Shvat and learn, absorb and share wisdom. Out of the tremendous amount of existing sources relating to each subject, we picked only a few that could complement each other and fit certain values or attributes. The additional sources, ideas and values would convert this work into more of a resource book rather than a companion for the celebration of Tu B'Shvat. For those who are interested in continuing this journey on their own and expanding their horizons, we strongly recommend looking at additional sources. The world of Jewish wisdom and knowledge is full of surprises waiting for those curious enough to dare to ask questions. It is a great way to explore our Jewish heritage while trying to improve ourselves and the world.

Here are some recommendations as you continue your exploration:

- Try to find the sources suggested here and view them on your own in their original form, within their context.

- There are a lot of books written on these Jewish subjects. Some that we recommend are:
 1. "Learning Under the Tree" by Michael Even Esh and Yehonatan Shumer, Livnot U'Lehibanot
 2. "Judaism and Ecology" by Aubrey Rose
 3. "Nature's Wealth" by Rabbi Moshe Cohen Shaouli and Rabbi Yaakov Fisher
 4. "Nature in Our Biblical Heritage" by Nogah Hareuveni
 5. "Ecology in the Bible" by Nogah Hareuveni
 6. "Torah and Flora" by Louis I. Rabinowitz
- Ask Rabbi Google.
- Check-out some additional resources on our web-site <http://www.livnot.org/alumni/educational-resources/>
- Songs: If you do not know the tunes for the Tu B'Shvat songs listed above, you can search for them on YouTube.

May you be blessed to continue the journey with loving and open companions and find the Radical Amazement in the world around you!

Shalom!

ABOUT LIVNOT

Livnot U'Lehibanot is a non-profit organization, based in Tzfat, founded in 1980, which aims to inspire Jewish young adults to explore their heritage and spirituality in an open-minded community while building up the Land and people of Israel. We want to share with you our core values and vision, and invite you to join us in continuing to impact Tzfat, Israel and the global Jewish community.

The core of Livnot's activity is our educational program, designed for young adults with minimal prior Jewish education or engagement. Participants engage in community building, Judaism in nature, spirituality, personal growth and repairing the world. What makes our programs unique? A warm atmosphere, caring and professional staff and well-organized programming, which includes two-three hikes a week, various meaningful community service projects, mind-opening discussions and classes, a festive Shabbat experience and "hands-on" Jewish learning.

Livnot's guiding vision and daily actions are based on three pillars:

- **Community Service.** Volunteering puts the Jewish ideals of gratitude, giving and mutual responsibility into action. Livnot's meaningful service projects create a special bond to the Land and People of Israel as well as a sense of accomplishment and purpose, leading to personal growth and acknowledgement of one's potential.
- **Hiking and Nature.** Connecting with your soul is tied strongly to connecting with the Land of Israel. We feel that nature serves as a perfect classroom to learn about Israel's history and connect to Jewish values. Excursions through waterfalls and ancient synagogues in the Galilee and Golan challenge participants physically and spiritually as they discuss, reflect and explore new topics.
- **Jewish Content and Learning.** Livnot offers a unique and authentic Jewish experience that provides a safe space to explore Judaism in an open-minded and supportive atmosphere. Our Shabbat experience is unique among Israel programs, with a proven lasting impact. We feel it is important to provide a welcoming environment for each participant to explore their own Judaism.

Besides our educational programs, Livnot is involved in multiple community projects. Livnot works with local partners to establish and support projects which provide educational resources, improve the lives of locals in this outlying region and increase tourism. Livnot is involved in rebuilding the Old City, helping needy families and immigrants, clearing paths in the ancient cemetery, developing the Metzuda Citadel Park and Blue Valley Nature Reserve.

Our Latest Projects:

The Kahal. In 2005, Livnot began to excavate the site that at the time was only rocks and rubble. Engineers saw the site as worthless, but Livnot volunteers have since discovered a series of old structures and underground rooms in the heart of the Old City. In 2011, the Israeli government declared these 16th century ruins, on property owned by Livnot, a National Heritage Site. The Kahal is currently being developed into a Spiritual Living Museum for interactive and educational tours.

Mercaz Hashra'a (Inspiration Center). Livnot received a special grant for renovations to the Livnot campus, to create a space to serve as a spiritual center for Israelis. Many individuals travel to distant countries such as India or Tibet to seek spiritual clarity and enlightenment, but we should question: why leave the Holy Land when mysticism and spirituality are found all around us right in the heart of Tzfat?

Simtaot. With this virtual guide, visitors can now tour the magic alleyways and ancient synagogues through an artistic map and explanatory videos in English and Hebrew.

"...Livnot has given me the tools to take home what I've learned from nature, text and people, and make it reality, not just a memory"
-Emily R., Baltimore, MD





To Build & To Be Built

Livnot U'Lehibanot

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