

The Jewish Parent Page

VOL. XI, NO. IV • TU BISH'VAT

In celebration of Israel's 60th year, each issue of Volume XI of *The Jewish Parent Page* will highlight Israel and Hebrew in connection to the holidays. For more information on the holidays and how to celebrate them, access past volumes of *The Jewish Parent Page* at urj.org/educate/parent.



Tu BiSh'vat—
15th of Sh'vat

Connections

We celebrate the trees and produce of the Land of Israel on Tu BiSh'vat, also known as *Rosh HaShanah La-ilanot*, the New Year of the Trees. You may celebrate a special seder for Tu BiSh'vat at which you will eat different kinds of fruits and nuts native to Israel. These may include the seven species referred to in Deuteronomy: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates (honey). Other foods you may find at your seder also grow in Israel: almond (the trees bloom at this time in Israel), orange and carob.

At the seder we drink wine or grape juice. Grapes have been cultivated for so long that even Noah grew them! Four cups of wine, in different combinations of white and red, represent the four seasons in Israel during the seder.



Family Discussion

Read the following legend from the Talmud (*Taanit* 23a) and discuss the questions that follow.

One day Honi was walking along a road and saw a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked, "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?" The man answered, "70 years." Honi then asked, "Do you expect to live that long and be able to eat the fruit?" The man said, "I found a world with fruit because my ancestors planted trees for me. So now I am planting trees for my children."

- What kinds of things are you able to enjoy because your parents and grandparents took care of them with you in mind?
- If you could leave a tree for your children and grandchildren to enjoy, what kind of tree would it be and why?
- What have you worked on or taken care of that will take many years before you can see the "fruit" or benefit of your contribution?

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Family Activities

Like the story of the carob tree above, many fruits and trees in Israel have legends and teachings associated with them. For example, the pomegranate has the same name as the crowns that decorate the Torah scroll: *rimonim*. It also is said that the many seeds inside a pomegranate are equal to the number of mitzvot in the Torah: 613.

One tradition during Tu BiSh'vat is to eat 15 different kinds of fruits and nuts at a Tu BiSh'vat seder. The fruits and nuts are divided into categories: those with an inedible peel, those with a seed or pit, and those that are entirely edible. A fourth category might be those with both a peel and a seed (like an orange).

For your family activity, take a trip to the grocery store and buy as many different kinds of fruits as you can. Pick a few you have never tried before. Before you eat the fruit, look at the characteristics of each one. Try dividing them into categories. Then make up a teaching to explain the similarities and differences.

- What does a fruit with a hard outside but soft inside symbolize to you?
- What can we learn from a nut that is bitter straight from the tree but tasty once it's roasted?
- What can you say about the color or texture of the fruit?

You might want to illustrate your ideas and make a book of folktales to read at your seder.

Kol Yisrael—Voice of Israel

By Mike Nitzan, Founding Member, Kibbutz Lotan

Tu BiSh'vat, even in the southern Arava desert, is a blustery time. Wrapped up in heavy jackets, the members of Kibbutz Lotan participate in a creative service prepared by one of the members and then head out to sites around the kibbutz to “green” the desert. On the night when the holiday begins, we celebrate with a seder that includes readings about the seven species, most of which grow around the kibbutz. As the second Reform Zionist kibbutz, Lotan implements the mission of “The people of Israel studying the Torah of Israel in the Land of Israel” through activities and experiences that enhance families’ physical connection to and responsibility for the land.

The concept of greening the kibbutz has changed over the course of its 25-year history. Over the last 10 years, biblical “dominion over the land” has been the leading theme. Lotan recently became recognized as one of Israel’s leading environmental communities



by adapting the Book of Genesis approach of “tending and tilling” the earth. Through a sustainable development strategy, Tu BiSh'vat has become the time to plant foliage for the grazing of goats, which produce milk for boutique cheeses. In addition, we aid and restore habitat and create “rest stops” for the world’s second largest bird migration that passes through the kibbutz in autumn and spring by planting trees and shrubs in Lotan’s migratory bird reserve and soon-to-open bird-watching park.

The community, including its guests (educational groups that stay for varying durations on the kibbutz), studies and works together to create an atmosphere of respect for each other and the land that nurtures them.

Photo credit: All photos in this issue are from Kibbutz Lotan.



Find another story about Honi and other tales in *Ten Classic Jewish Children's Stories* by Peninnah Schram.

Did you know that it is against the law in Israel to cut down an olive tree if it still bears fruit? You can learn more facts like this in *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols* by Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch.

Rodef Shalom Congregation in Pittsburgh has its own biblical garden. Established in 1987, the garden is the largest of its kind in North America, covering one-third of an acre. Read about the garden in *Biblical Plants: A Guide to the Rodef Shalom Biblical Botanical Garden* by Irene Jacob.

The Israel Nature and National Parks Protection Authority is dedicated to developing, protecting and promoting Israel's natural, historical and recreational sites that have been natural parks and nature reserves, as well as those that are in the process of formally becoming national parks and nature reserves. To learn more about their work visit www.parks.org.il/ParksENG/.

Kibbutz Lotan, an ecological Reform kibbutz in the Arava Valley, is home to the Lotan Center for Creative Ecology, the Lotan Park and the Kibbutz Lotan Centre for Birdwatching. Browse their site and Tu BiSh'vat resources at www.kibbutzlotan.com/.

Neot Kedumim, located between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, is dedicated to the preservation and presentation of biblical plants and agriculture. Learn more about the organization and take a virtual tour at www.n-k.org.il/public/english/.

Hebrew Holiday Vocabulary		
The seven species native to the Land of Israel, mentioned in Deuteronomy 8:8	<i>shivat haminim</i>	שְׁבֻעַת הַמִּינים
fig, figs	<i>t'ainah, t'ainim</i>	תְּאִינָה, תְּאִינִים
date, dates	<i>tamar, t'marim</i>	תְּמָר, תְּמָרִים
almond, almond tree	<i>shaked, shkeidi'ah</i>	שֶׁקֶד, שֶׁקֶדִיָּה
tree, trees	<i>ilan, ilanot</i>	אֵילָן, אֵילָנוֹת
tree or wood, trees	<i>ner, neirot</i>	עֵץ, עֵצִים

Recipe Corner

Most Americans are comfortable with cereal or pancakes for breakfast, but what about salad? A chopped salad, like the one below, is a typical meal in many Middle Eastern countries and in Israel often is enjoyed at any of the three main meals. Try it and see what you think!

- 4 medium tomatoes
- 2 medium cucumbers
- ¼ head cabbage
- 2 medium carrots
- 5 to 10 radishes
- green onion

- 2 hard boiled eggs
- 2 tablespoonfuls parsley

Dressing

- 2 or 3 tablespoonfuls lemon juice
- 2 or 3 tablespoonfuls oil

Cut vegetables (except carrots) into small cubes. Grate carrot and egg. Garnish with parsley. Combine lemon juice and oil; add to salad before serving. Mix salad well.

This recipe was adapted and included with permission from the Information and Internet Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem.