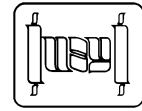




# Tu B'shvat Higyah!



Tu B'shvat in a "nutshell:"

- Also known as *chamisha asar b'Shvat* or the 15<sup>th</sup> of Shvat (the letters "TU" represents the number 15 in Hebrew) or *Rosh Hashanah la' ilanot* (New Year for the Trees).
- Celebrates the blooming of the first buds of the fruit trees in Israel
- In North America, Tu B'shvat has become a celebration of the environment and is an opportunity for Jews to strive to 'go green.'
- Customs include eating fruits and nuts from Israel of the *Sheva Minim* (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates) and donating money to plant trees in Israel. You can observe Tu B'shvat by committing to reduce, reuse and recycle (and enjoying some dates and other fruits isn't bad either!).

## Holiday source:

The Mishnah says: "There are four New Year days: The first of Nissan, the New Year for kings and the festivals; The first of Elul, the New Year for the tithing of animals; The first of Tishrei, the New Year for the counting of years, the shemittah (sabbatical year), the yovel (jubilee year), planting and vegetation; and the first of Shevat (according to Shammai) or the fifteenth of Shevat (according to Hillel, by whose ruling we abide), the New Year for trees.

## Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 1:1)

Celebrating the blooming of the trees can be challenging in the middle of a cold North American Winter. Here are some ideas to bring the spirit of this "green" holiday to your community.

## Tu B'shvat Seders:

Two common and fun Tu B'shvat activities for USY and Kadima are environmental social action programs and the now more common Tu B'shvat Seder. There are many Tu B'shvat seder manuals available online. Here are a few links:

1. From the Jewish Theological Seminary:  
[http://jtsecoreps.com/JTS\\_EcoReps/Resources\\_files/JTS%20Tu%20Bishvat%20Seder.pdf](http://jtsecoreps.com/JTS_EcoReps/Resources_files/JTS%20Tu%20Bishvat%20Seder.pdf)
2. [www.myjewishlearning.com](http://www.myjewishlearning.com) -  
[http://judaism.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=judaism&cdn=religion&tm=232&gps=120\\_1362\\_1003\\_590&f=11&tt=2&bt=1&bts=1&zu=http%3A//www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Tu\\_Bishvat/TO\\_Tu\\_Practices/Seder.htm](http://judaism.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=judaism&cdn=religion&tm=232&gps=120_1362_1003_590&f=11&tt=2&bt=1&bts=1&zu=http%3A//www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Tu_Bishvat/TO_Tu_Practices/Seder.htm)
3. Shema Yisrael  
<http://www.shemayisrael.com/tubshevat/TuBShevat.pdf>
4. WUJS- World Union of Jewish Students  
[http://wujs.org.il/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=217&Itemid=51](http://wujs.org.il/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=217&Itemid=51)

### Programming Ideas:

- Go Green! Sponsor a synagogue wide recycling program or advocate to replace synagogue light bulbs with energy efficient light bulbs.
- Observe and Conserve- encourage those who normally drive to synagogue on Shabbat to walk in order to "observe and conserve" both Shabbat, Tu B'shvat and the environment.
- Hebrew Schools- Share some texts about Judaism and the environment and have the students create an art project with items from the earth. Make a collage or *midrash* of the weekly *sedra* using recycled material.
- Many youth programs are now nut-free (other than the kids who are a little nutty sometimes!), serve fruits from Israel such as dates or pomegranates for snack.
- Ecology in Israel art display- display photos of ecology and agriculture in Israel at your next program. If planning for a Hebrew School, have the students learn about agricultural technology in Israel
- If you live in a warmer climate, plant a garden for your synagogue
- Clean up a park and then have a picnic of fruits and nuts (and be sure to clean up after yourselves!).
- Have USY sponsor a contest in the synagogue for how many trees can be planted by the congregation. USYers can create "commercials" for Shabbat morning to advertise their initiative and hand a paper tree (of recycled paper, of course) marking the fundraising effort.
- Do you do a Mitzvah of the Month in your Hebrew school? Try focusing on *Baal Tashchit* (limiting waste) this month and run activities on waste management for the classroom and home.

Many of you may remember scrunching your nose at the thought of figs and dates on Tu B'shvat as a youngster. Explaining the origins of why we eat these unusual foods on Tu B'shvat can help explain this food custom that may not be as tasty as Chanukah sufganiot.

Takin' Tu B'shvat from the Text: Click here for text sources for Tu B'shvat  
[http://judaism.about.com/od/tubshvat/a/tushvat\\_seder.htm](http://judaism.about.com/od/tubshvat/a/tushvat_seder.htm)

*For more on Tu B'shvat, check out the Department of Youth Activities publication Mo'adim L'simcha: Celebrating Jewish Holidays, available at the following link:*  
<https://secure.uscj.org/bookservice/> (click on Department of Youth Activities to find this and other youth friendly selections)