



The Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education
Seidman Educational Resource Center

Tu BiShevat Today

by Lyndall Miller,

ACAJE Consultant for Early Childhood Education

Now that we are back in the Land, Tu BiShevat has once again gained a new significance. Anyone from the east coast of the United States who visits Israel cannot help but be struck with the need for MORE TREES. The efforts of the Jewish National Fund which works toward the afforestation of Israel are highlighted during this holiday. Young children join in tree-planting ceremonies organized by JNF, and our children in the United States join them in spirit, if not with an actual hoe and shovel. Certificates for trees to be planted in Israel can be purchased through any synagogue office from the Jewish National Fund, also called Keren Kayemet Yisrael.

We also give money to tzedakah on Tu BiShevat. Symbolically, we give ninety-one cents, since that is the numerical value of the word "ilan" – tree.

Some families enjoy a version (usually less complicated) of the kabbalists' Tu BiShevat seder. At least, many fruity and nutty dishes are served at the Tu BiShevat meal.

Because of our awakened awareness to ecological issue and how they are connected to tree, Tu BiShevat has become a Jewish environmentalist holiday. This approach seems completely appropriate when we consider that the rabbinic value of "Bal Tashhit" – you will not destroy – is based on a Torah tract about trees. Some of us use this time to make donations to nature protection groups, or to reexamine our own efforts at conservation and recycling.

Of course, we can always just look out the window on Tu BiShevat and enjoy the beauty of trees in their most basic form. Even in winter, bare of leaves, flowers, and fruit, the trees move up from the ground with their quiet grace. Soon, Tu BiShevat tells us, they will show us that they are performers in the great dance of the earth, as we move toward spring.

The Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education
7607 Old York Road
Melrose Park, PA 19027
215-635-8940 Fax: 215-635-8946
www.ajae.org info@ajae.org