



# Venture into Tu B'Shevat



*Activities, recipes, information, and more  
that will help you learn about and  
celebrate Tu B'Shevat.*

# Venture into Tu B'Shevat



## tool • kit

a personal set of resources, abilities, or skills.

*"Venture into Tu B'Shevat is a toolkit full of things you can use to learn, play, and celebrate Tu B'Shevat!"*

**In this kit,** you will find activities, recipes, information, and more that will help you learn about and celebrate Tu B'Shevat. If you have questions or are seeking more information, please reach out. jkidphilly is here to help!

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# Venture into Tu B'Shevat



## What is Tu B'Shevat?

### For 2-4 year olds:

The words "*Tu B'Shevat*" actually are a date on the calendar. The Hebrew calendar's months have different names than the ones we are used to and one of them is called "*Shevat*." *Tu B'Shevat* means the 15th day of the month of *Shevat* and that's the day we celebrate the "birthday of the trees."

The Torah says that we should not eat the fruit from brand new baby trees. We should not eat any until the tree is five years old, so the tree has time to get big and strong. But, since trees are planted at all different times, it might be hard to remember all the different birthdays. To make it easier, the Rabbis decided that the 15<sup>th</sup> of *Shevat* would be the birthday for all trees.

Tu B'Shevat comes later in the winter when it's not so rainy anymore and the dirt is ready for trees to be planted. Sometimes we also call Tu B'Shevat "Israel's Earth Day" and we remember that it's our job to take care of the trees and the earth.

### For 5-9 year olds:

The words "*Tu B'Shevat*" mean "the 15th day of the month of *Shevat*."

The Torah says that, when you plant a new tree, you shouldn't eat its fruit for the first three years of its life. You should just let it grow, leaving any fruit on the tree. In the fourth year, farmers should offer the fruit to the Temple as a thank you for the land and the harvest, and then finally, in the fifth year, the farmer could keep all the fruit.

But, the question is: how would all the farmers keep track of the "birthday" of a tree — how would they know when each tree was ready to harvest if they planted them at all different times of the year? The Rabbis decided that the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month of *Shevat* would be a general "birthday" for all trees, regardless of when they were actually planted. So, even if a tree was planted in another month or on another day, they still counted the 15<sup>th</sup> of *Shevat* as its birthday.

**Why the 15th of *Shevat*?** This date comes after the middle of winter (usually in February), when most of the rain in Israel has already fallen, leaving the soil damp and ready for the planting of new trees.

Tu B'Shevat is often called "Israel's Earth Day" or "Israeli Arbor Day." Sometimes, this day is celebrated as a way to remind Jews of our duty to care for the natural world.

### For ages 10+

The words "*Tu B'Shevat*" literally refer to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month of *Shevat*. "*Tu*" stands for the Hebrew letters "*tet*" and "*vav*", which together have the numerical value of 9 and 6, adding up to 15. But there are several reasons we celebrate "the birthday of the trees" on this date.

The Torah says that any fruit that grows on newly planted trees should not be eaten for the first three years. In the fourth year, farmers should offer the fruit to the Temple as a thank you for the land and the harvest, and then finally, in the fifth year, the farmer could keep all the fruit. But — how would all the farmers keep track of the "birthday" of a tree — how would they count the years? The Rabbis decided that the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month of *Shevat* would be a general "birthday" for all trees, regardless of when they were actually planted.

**Why this date?** Tu B'Shevat falls after mid-winter (usually in February), when most of the annual rainfall in Israel has already fallen, leaving the soil ready for the planting of new trees.

Tu B'Shevat is often called "Israel's Earth Day" or "Israeli Arbor Day." Sometimes, this day is celebrated as a way to remind Jews of our duty to care for the natural world.



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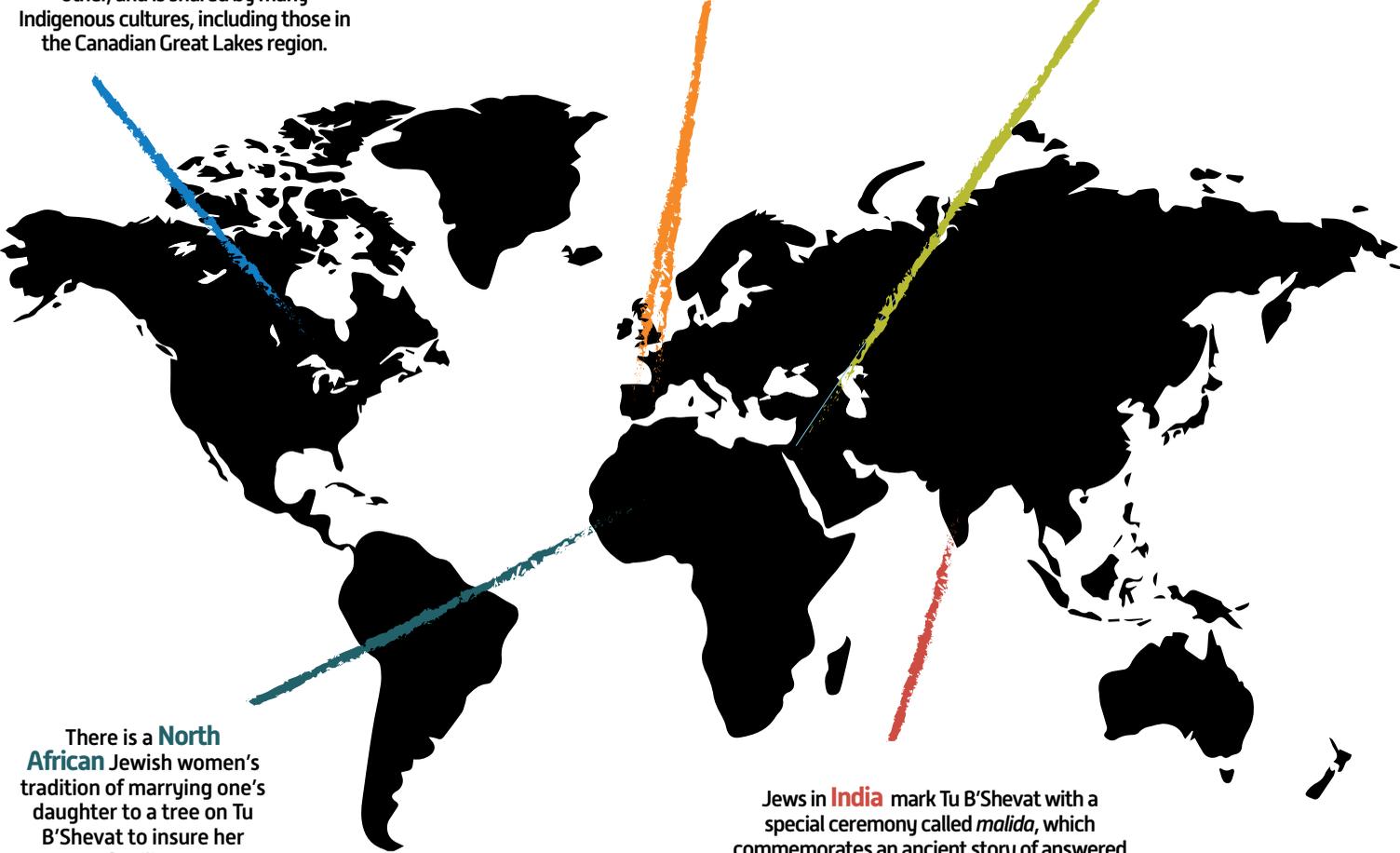


## Tu B'Shevat Around the World

In **Canada**, there is a strong focus on Indigenous people and land during Tu B'Shevat. The concept of *Dish With One Spoon* explains the relationship between humans, the land, and each other, and is shared by many Indigenous cultures, including those in the Canadian Great Lakes region.

Some Sephardic communities in **Portugal** and **Spain** celebrate a festival called *Las Frutas*. Children often put on plays in Ladino or walk in parades, holding fruit baskets.

In **Israel** and most other parts of the world, Tu B'Shevat is celebrated by planting trees and taking care of the earth.



There is a **North African** Jewish women's tradition of marrying one's daughter to a tree on Tu B'Shevat to insure her fertility.

Jews in **India** mark Tu B'Shevat with a special ceremony called *malida*, which commemorates an ancient story of answered prayers. Sweetened dried rice mixed with fruits, nuts, and aromatics are piled high in the center of a round plate. The shape of the rice is meant to represent Mt. Sinai

## Make Parsley Seed Paper to Plant

*Create seed paper to keep or to give away. Plant parsley to be harvested for Passover seder!*

### Materials

2-ply paper towels, Parsley seeds, Non-toxic water-based white glue (like Elmer's), Q-tips, Scissors, Cardboard, Decorative paper tape

### Steps

1. Cut your paper towel into whatever shape you want the finished seed paper to be.
2. Peel the two layers of paper towel open, leaving one edge connected, if possible.
3. Add tiny dots of the glue onto the inner surface of the paper towel, spaced about 4 inches apart.
4. Place single seeds on the dots of glue.
5. Once your seeds are in place, use the Q-tip to make a thin line of glue all around the edge of the paper towel and press the top layer in place.
6. When you're ready to plant, bury the seed paper under a thin layer of soil and water and care for it until it sprouts!



### Try this:

*Package your seed paper as a gift! Cut two pieces of cardboard slightly larger than your seed paper and sandwich the paper between them. Use decorative paper tape to hold it together and decorate it for a friend.*

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## Watercolor Tree Blow-Painting

*Use a straw and watercolor to make tree paintings!*

### Materials

white paper (thicker is better because of how wet it will get, but any paper will work), watercolor paints, water, drinking straws, colored pencils/crayons/markers

### Steps

1. Place a few drops of watercolor paint (any color) in the center of the paper.
2. Blow it with the drinking straw in different directions, which will create the branches.
3. With a paintbrush, create the tree trunk however you'd like it.
4. Using watercolor, markers, crayons, or colored pencils, draw leaves and/or blossoms and/or fruit on the tree to make it whatever type of tree you choose.



**Try  
this:**

*See if you can make your tree look like one of the trees that grow in Israel. (Use the guide on the next page!)*



# Venture into Tu B'Shevat



## Trees of Israel

*Click each tree to learn more about it!*



Pomegranate



Terebinth



Holly Oak



Black Mulberry



Syrian Ash



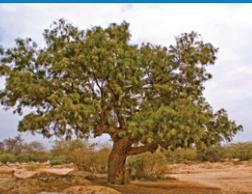
Almond



Carob



Stone Pine



Tamarix



Twisted Acacia



Common Fig



Strawberry Tree



# Venture into Tu B'Shevat



## Tree Yoga

*Try these five tree yoga poses to remind you about the five years we wait to eat the fruit of a new tree. (Three years to let the tree grow strong, one year to offer to the Temple, and then the fifth year for you!)*



**Year One:** The new tree is just beginning to grow! Make yourself as tiny as you can.



**Year Two:** The tree is beginning to stand up straight and tall. Slowly bring yourself to a standing position as you're able.



**Year Three:** The tree is full-grown and is beginning to bear fruit. Stretch your arms up like branches.



**Year Four:** It's time to harvest some fruit and give it to the Temple. If you're able, balance on one foot while keeping your branches up!



You can also try any of the arm poses on their own from a sitting position if you prefer.



**Year Five:** Now it's time for you to eat the fruit! Bring your hands together in gratitude for the gift of the harvest.



# Venture into Tu B'Shevat



## Keep Learning! Jewish Value: *Gevurah* Inner Strength

*Gevurah* is sometimes translated as *strength* and sometimes as *power* and refers to both inner and outer strength. It also includes the idea that we all can be heroic in our everyday lives by doing what is right and just. Having the strength to wait and make sacrifices is often called *willpower* and we show willpower when we wait for years before eating the fruit of a new tree. And, then again, when we harvest the fruit but offer it to the Temple before taking some for ourselves.

What are some of the ways in your life that you live the Jewish value of *gevurah*? Are there things you have to wait for or things you choose not to do or say, even though it's hard to do that?

### Game:

## חמש שניות *Chamaysh Shniot* (Five Seconds)



Play this game with any trivia, vocabulary, or academic content and any number of kids. Ask one question and instruct everyone to, "practice *gevurah*" and wait a full ***chamaysh shniot*** (five seconds) before shouting out the answer.

Count together out loud:

- אחת | *achat* [1]
- שתיים | *sh'tayem* [2]
- שלוש | *shalosh* [3]
- ארבע | *arbah* [4]
- חמש | *chamaysh* [5]



You can play around with the rules, making the wait time longer or shorter; the whole idea is to build self-control by waiting just a little bit longer than we really want to!

# Venture into Tu B'Shevat



## The Seven Species

***What are the seven species and why do we eat them on Tu B'Shevat?***

There are *seven species* of food that the Torah mentions as being very important to the land of Israel and its agriculture. Almost all of the items either grow on trees/vines or are made from fruits that grow on trees and because of that, we traditionally eat them on Tu B'Shevat when we are celebrating the New Year of the Trees. It is customary to have a Tu B'Shevat seder that includes these seven species. So — what are they and what do they represent?



According to this article by [My Jewish Learning](#):

1. **Wheat** represents *chesed*, kindness, because it is so nourishing and accessible.
2. **Barley** is the embodiment of the Jewish value of *gevurah*, restraint, due to its thick hull.
3. **Grapes** signify *tiferet*, beauty, due to their color and manner of growing.
4. **Figs** represent *netzach*, endurance, for their lengthy ripening stages.
5. **Pomegranates** symbolize *hod*, majesty or glory, for their crown shape.
6. **Olive oil** represents *yesod*, foundation, for the role that the ingredient plays in many foods.
7. **Dates** denote *malchut*, kingdom, thanks to their digestive benefits.



# Venture into Tu B'Shevat



## More Resources

*More to learn, play, cook, read, watch, and listen!*

### LEARN

Have a short, sweet seder full of delicious fruits at home! Here are a number of Tu B'Shevat seders that you might use:

- A [Simple Haggadah](#) from PJ Library
- [Hazon Seder for School-Age Children](#)
- A variety of [Tu B'Shevat Seders](#) for Teens and Adults

### PLAY

- The jkidphilly Tu B'Shevat [Pinterest board](#) is chock-full of fun ideas!
- Check out the [jkidphilly calendar](#) to see what we have going on for Tu B'Shevat

### COOK

- Try some Tu B'Shevat [Chocolate Fruit Bark](#).
- Create a beautiful [tree fruit platter](#).
- Whip up some [Tu B'Shevat truffles](#).
- Try this [salad or dessert](#) made with traditional Tu B'Shevat foods.

### READ

- [Sadie's Snowy Tu B'Shevat](#)
- [Planting Parsley](#)
- [Picture a Tree](#)
- [Apple and Magnolia](#)
- [Pearl Moscowitz's Last Stand](#)
- [The Miracle Seed](#)
- ...and so many more!

### WATCH/LISTEN

- Learn some [Tu B'Shevat signs](#) from Alanna over at [jkidaccess.org](#).
- [Shalom Sesame](#) videos about taking care of trees.
- Here is a favorite from Laurie Berkner – [An Environment Kids Song!](#)
- Spice up your Tu B'Shevat with the [PJ Library Spotify playlist](#).
- Have a listen to this [Ladino Tu B'Shevat song!](#)

### LINKS

- More about the Canadian Indigenous concept of [Dish With One Spoon](#)
- [Tu B'Shevat 101](#)
- [Origins and Practices of Tu B'Shevat](#)
- [How to Celebrate Tu B'Shevat](#)
- More about the Indian ritual of [malida](#)
- More about the Ladino [Las Frutas](#) celebration
- More about the North African tradition of [marrying a tree](#)
- [The Seven Species](#)

**...for families just like yours!**

[www.jkidphilly.org](http://www.jkidphilly.org)