



TU B'SHEVAT IS COMING!

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It's still chilly outside, and furry animals hide, but Tu B'Shevat – the birthday of the trees! – is coming. The whole family celebrates by planting a tree, eating fruits and nuts, and appreciating the many gifts the earth offers.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Did you know trees have a birthday? In Judaism, they do, and it's on *Tu B'Shevat* (which in Hebrew simply means the fifteenth day of the month of *Shevat* in the Jewish calendar). This time honors the special relationship human beings have with trees – and with the environment at large. In ancient times, the holiday helped farmers keep track of when their trees were old enough for their fruits to be harvested. Today the day is an opportunity for us to think deeply about being responsible stewards of the planet. Jewish arguments for taking care of the earth go back to the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) and continue today in the form of ecological activism.

In Israel, Tu B'Shevat is an excellent time to plant trees – the weather is mild in the Middle East, and what better way to prepare for spring than with beautiful blooming trees? In many parts of the world, people may have a Tu B'Shevat seder – a ritual meal incorporating fruits and nuts that come from trees. And any time of year is a great time to consider ways to take care of the planet. Think of caring for the earth as a birthday present for the trees!