

Tu B'Shvat

Dear Parents,

The Jewish calendar is sprinkled with special days, each with its own message of self-betterment and personal growth.

The Tu B'Shvat holiday, the New Year for Trees, occurs on the 15th day of the month of Shvat, corresponding this year to February 9th. Tu B'Shvat is the beginning of the growth season in Israel,

providing the demarcation line for a year's agricultural production. Biblically, farmers in Israel are required to bring a percentage of their yearly crops to charity; Tu B'Shvat is the cut off date.



But I am not living in Israel, nor do I tithe produce to charity, as I am not a farmer. So what practical relationship do I have with this holiday?

The message of Tu B'Shvat is that we are part of the created world and inextricably bound to all creations. This agricultural holiday brings to mind the relationship we have to each other and to the world at large. Relationships bring with them richness and responsibilities.



Tu B'Shvat brings to mind the relationships we have with our fellow human. If one is lacking, we are obligated to provide support. In Hebrew, the word 'charity' does not exist. Instead, we use the word 'tzedakah', which means righteousness or justice. It is not charitable to give tzedakah, but expected. We are all responsible for each other.

Tu B'Shvat brings to mind our relationship we have to the earth and her produce. We benefit so much from it, but we must treat it responsibly and with dignity.

Tu B'Shvat brings to mind our relationship to the Land of Israel. Although it is still winter here, in Israel the season of growth begins.



Each holiday has its customs and rituals. On Tu B'Shvat we eat fruits, specifically the fruits and grains with which Israel is praised: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, dates, pomegranates and olives.



Happy Tu B'Shvat!

Malkie Herson

