The Celebration of Tu Bishvat

Celebrating Tu Bishvat the way we do is a relatively new concept.

With origins of the seder dating back to only the 1600s, Tu Bishvat is now celebrated as a holiday of Eretz Yisrael. By saying blessings and partaking in many kinds of fruits, specifically the Shivat Hamanim, we have the opportunity to thank Hashem for the wonder of renewed life, reawaken our own physical and spiritual connections to the land, and to express gratitude for returning us to our homeland.

There are four Roshei Shana

"The first of Nisan is the Rosh HaShanah for kings and holidays.
The first of Elul is the Rosh HaShanah for tithe animals. Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Shimon said, "The first of Tishray [is the Rosh HaShanah for tithe animals].
The first of Tishray is the Rosh HaShanah for years, Shemitan, Yovel, for planting and for vegetables.
The first of Shvat is the Rosh HaShanah for trees, according to Beit Shmuel. Beit Hillel says it is on the fifteenth [of the month]."
(Rosh HaShanah chapter 1, Mishnah 1)
Wheat and Barley are both tied together by one Mitzvah: Sefirat HaOmer.

Mezonot

Wheat & Barley
אריך תיות ושוכרה

Take a cookie or cracker and make the Bracha
비용 אתא יאלהים מזל השולח בורה בורה מזי מוזמן.

Did you know?
- Aaron Aaronson, Agronomist and founder of the NILI spy organization, discovered Israel’s wild wheat (referred to as mother-wheat) thereby establishing what type of wheat would grow best in Eretz Yisrael.
- Israel recently started a project called “Eretz Chita” where they are encouraging more and more people to plant traditional wheat varieties that have been developed over the years in the Land of Israel, as opposed to modern varieties cultivated to produce a higher yield and quantity.

On the Map
- The mother-wheat was found near Rosh Pina, a city next to Tzfat. Rosh Pina was started in 1882 by Romanian immigrants, after a previously failed attempt to build a Jewish agricultural settlement further down the valley in 1878. The name was inspired by the pasuk: הָרָגָשׁ וַתְּרָפֵס הַשָּׁפֶל יַעֲשֶׂה עֲשָׂרֵים וְאַשְׁרֵי שִׁלְשָׁמִים עָשָׂרֵים (מָגוֹר כְּלִילָה).

Did you know?
- Grapes are the fruit with the highest concentration of sugar
- While definitely known for its ancient wine history, Israel is also a rising star in the modern day wine industry, winning awards at worldwide competitions, and spurring a lot of interest in wine connoisseurs all over the world.

On the Map
- The Israeli wine industry was started by Baron Edmund Rothschild, who provided funding for growing grapes to young agricultural settlements starting from 1882. Perhaps the most well known of those settlements is Zichron Yaakov. Although considered as the birthplace of the modern Israeli wine industry, wine grapes are now grown everywhere in Israel, from the Golan and upper Galil, all the way down to the Negev desert.
Olive

Take an olive and make a Beracha over it. Before reciting the Beracha, have in mind that this Beracha is being recited for all the other tree fruits you will eat at the celebration. If you do not eat olives and will only be eating a different fruit, remember to recite the Beracha before eating that fruit:

"ברוח אמת י אלהינו מלך
השמים ברא וכי עני" (Talmud - Menachot 53b)

Everybody makes mistakes, and everyone may make an incorrect decision from time to time. What this Gemara is teaching us is that through the process of sinning and the ensuing punishments, there is a pure and refined product that may be achieved. We don’t see our shortcoming and downfall, as a one-off, but rather as part of a process to becoming better each day.

Did you know?

- Most of the oil that is contained in the olive is actually in the pit, which is why, unlike any other fruit, when you extract the liquid out of it, you need to crush the pit as well.

On the Map

- The Gemara in Menachot refers to the olive oil produced in Tekoa as the finest in the land, and it was from there that they brought the oil to the Beit Hamikdash for the Korbanot. Tekoa of the Galil is identified as an ancient village on the slopes of Mt. Meron where Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai had a Beit Midrash. Considered as a satellite community of Meron itself, it would offer an additional explanation of Rashbi being buried on Har Meron.

Why is Israel likened to an olive-tree?

To tell you that just as the olive produces its oil only after being pounded, so Israel returns to the right way only after suffering. (Talmud - Menachot 53b)

Did you know?

- The center of ancient date production in Eretz Yisrael was Ein Gedi, which is also famous for another extremely valuable commodity in the Roman Empire - Afarsimon oil. Mentioned in Tanach as one of Yehuda’s border cities, Ein Gedi is not only the site of beautiful nature, freshwater springs, and breathtaking hikes, but also home to an ancient synagogue with an impressive mosaic floor.

Date

The dates are eaten, the branches are used for Hallel, the twigs for schach (Sukkot), the bast for ropes.

There is no waste in any part of the date-palm.

The dates are eaten, the branches are used for Hallel, the twigs for schach (Sukkot), the bast for ropes. The leaves are used for besoms, and the planed boards for ceiling rooms. So, it is with Israel that none are worthless in Am Israel. (Midrash Rabba, Genesis 12,1)

Did you know?

- Dates from the Judean desert were a known and valued delicacy in the whole Roman Empire. Recently, scientists have been able to regrow the ancient date palm species from 2000 year old seeds found in ancient ruins in the Judean desert. This past summer 2020, those scientists were able to taste the first fruits of one of the “ancient” trees.
**Fig**

**Taanah**

Unlike all other trees, fig trees don’t produce visible flowers to grow their fruit.

*Why was the Torah likened to a fig-tree?*

Because, while the fruit of most other trees—the olive-tree, the vine, and the date-tree—is gathered all at once, that of the fig-tree is gathered little by little and it is the same with the Torah. One gathers a little learning today and much tomorrow, for it cannot be learned in one year nor in two years.” (Midrash Rabba, Numbers)

**Did you know?**

- Unlike all other trees, fig trees don’t produce visible flowers to grow their fruit. The flower itself is inside the fruit that grows and fertilizes itself.

**On the Map**

- Between Mevasseret and Tzuba lies a beautiful park and hiking area with trails, views, and ancient agricultural landscapes called the Sataf. At the heart of this scenic paradise lies two springs, one of them named Ein Bikura. The spring carries the preceding Arab name of Bikura, which, similarly to Hebrew, means ripening of the fig fruit.

**Pomegranate**

*“Your temples are like a split pomegranate” (Song of Songs 4:5). As the Gemara previously interpreted homiletically: What is the meaning of the word “Your temples [rakatekh]”? Even the most ignorant [reikanin] among you, Israel, are full of mitzvot like a pomegranate.”*

**Have you ever judged someone**

by one or two things that they have done? Or by their outside appearance? This Gemara teaches us that even those who appear to not have any merit are still full. Just as you would never expect to see so many beautiful seeds inside the pomegranate until you open it, so too we need to look inside of those around us, and realize all the beautiful merits that they have.

**Did you know?**

- The Pomegranate is a common Jewish symbol found on many items, both ancient artifacts and new art, which symbolizes prosperity, fertility, righteousness, and wisdom. For example, the Kohanim Gadol coat had pomegranates on it, and an ivory pomegranate was found near Har Bayit bearing the inscription “לבר ישי תבשל תדעש עטרות נצחיות” and dating back to the first Beit Hamikdash. It’s on display in the Israel Museum.

**On the Map**

- During one of the heroic moments of battle against the Philistim, Yonatan and his weapons-bearer sneak between the cliffs of Nachal Michmash to approach the Plishti camps. While this is happening Shaul is sitting “under the pomegranate [tree]” in Migron. While we do not know exactly where ancient Migron is today, the presumption is that it’s in the general vicinity of where the modern day Migron is located, right below the Psagot Winery.
Almonds

The almond tree is quickest to sprout

(hashkediyah)

Did you know?

- Almonds are botanically not considered nuts, but rather related to the stone fruit family of cherries, plums, peaches, etc.

On the Map

- Created as a Moshav in 1957, Shokeda was built for olim from North Africa in the Northern Negev, near Gaza. Similar to the explanation that almonds represents hastiness and eagerness, this name represent that hasty and eagerness of olim to return home to Eretz Yisrael, and also reflects the eagerness of the Kalaniot - red anemones, to bloom right around Tu Bishvat each year, blanketing the landscape with full red flowers.
In many Tu Bishvat Seders, it is customary to recite all the different brachot.

Here are a couple suggestions for Pri HaAdama and SheHakol:

- Celebrate Israeli agricultural pioneering with cherry tomatoes
- A fresh Israeli salad never disappoints - just chop up some cucumbers and tomatoes (onion optional), and dress with olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper
- Peanuts - nothing too Israeli about them, but they like to eat them...
- ... or Bamba?
- Try a nice cold ‘Beera Shchora’ or malt/black beer, an Israeli favorite drink made with malt; give barley a nod of appreciation for a chilled SheHakol.
- Or perhaps make a tribute to the famous Jaffa oranges, once served on the Queen of England’s table with some orange juice

“ברוך אתה ה’ אלוהינו מלך העולם אשר ברא אחרים לישראל”

“ברוך אתה ה’ אלוהינו מלך העולם אשר חסל נהיה בברכה”

Prayer of Outdoor Meditation

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov
In Conclusion

May It Be

Your will, O God of our mothers and fathers, that through our eating of the fruits, which we have blessed, that the trees will be filled with the glory of their ability to renew themselves, to blossom and grow, from the beginning of the year to its end. May our lives, as well, be renewed and filled with goodness, blessings, and peace.

Leshana Tova
Umevorechet
May the year be fruitful and blessed!

Leshana Tova
B’Yerushalayim
Habruya
Next year in rebuilt Jerusalem!

“When you look out at the world around you, you are looking at God; and He is looking back at you.”

(Reb Kalonymus Kalman Shapiro)