Devash
Because learning Torah is sweet
HADAR Children & Families
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# ט"ו בִּשְׁבָט

Tu Bishvat ט"ו בשבט

January 25, 2024

## עִנְיָנֵי דְיוֹמָא • The Calendar

The Gemara wonders why the Rosh Hashanah for trees is in Shevat. **What's happening in nature at this time of year?**

### Talmud Bavli Rosh Hashanah 14a

R. Elazar said that R. Oshaya said: This is when most of the rains have passed, even though most of the winter season is still ahead.

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת ראש השנה דף יד עמוד א

אָמַר רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר אָמַר רַבִּי אוֹשַׁעְיָא: הוֹאִיל וְיָצְאוּ רוֹב גִּשְׁמֵי שָׁנָה, וַעֲדַיִין רוֹב תְּקוּפָה מְבַחוּץ.

R. Oshaya says that Shevat is the right time for the Rosh Hashanah for trees because it's more than halfway through the rainy season. But he admits this is not so obvious because it's still the middle of winter!

Why does being halfway through the rainy season matter if winter isn't over yet? Rashi explains that this is the time when "עָלָה הַשֹּׁרֶף בְּאִילָנוֹת" - sap is rising inside the trees." Fruit isn't actually emerging on trees yet, but the roots and trunks are starting to pull water up to the branches, and that eventually will make fruit begin to appear.

- What's important about sap rising inside of trees?
- Why is it significant to celebrate something that is happening internally, something that is impossible to see or measure from the outside?

## חֲסִידוּת • Hasidut

Hasidut is Spiritual Torah from the students of the Baal Shem Tov.

**Why would we count the new year of the fruit before it starts to really grow - while the trees still look bare and wintry?!** Why is something as quiet and unnoticeable as the sap rising inside the trees important enough to mark the beginning of the year for fruit?

R. Yehudah Leib Eiger (Eastern Europe, 200 years ago) suggests that the sap rising quietly in trees represents an important idea about salvation and teaches us that Tu Bishvat may be more significant than we might have thought:

### אמרי אמת

כְּמוֹ כֵן בְּעֶסֶק יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם מַתְחִיל הַהִתְעוֹרְרוּת בְּט"ו בִּשְׁבָט וְיוֹצֵא בְּהִתְגַּלּוּת בְּחֹדֶשׁ נִיסָן,

כְּמוֹ עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה צוֹמֵחַ תָּמִיד בְּכָל שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה מֵאֵלָיו מִכֹּחַ הַנְּטִיעָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה, וְאַף שֶׁבַּחֹרֶף נֶחֱרַב וְיָבֵשׁ מִכָּל מָקוֹם כֹּחַ הַלַּחְלוּחִית לֹא נִפְסַק...

וּכְתִיב כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה, וּבָזֹאת מַרְאֶה לָנוּ הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ לָדַעַת שֶׁלֹּא יִתְיָאֵשׁ הָאָדָם לְעוֹלָם, אַף אִם קָרָה לוֹ אֵיזֶה נְפִילָה בִּדְבַר מָה חַס וְשָׁלוֹם כְּמוֹ שֶׁגַּם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה אַף שֶׁנֶּחֱרַב בֶּהָרִים, מִכָּל מָקוֹם אֶת פִּרְיוֹ יִתֵּן בְּעִתּוֹ, וְזֹאת יָשִׂים הָאָדָם תָּמִיד אֶל לִבּוֹ לָדַעַת שֶׁמֵּהַיּוֹם מַתְחִיל זְמַן הִתְעוֹרְרוּת יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם...

### Imrei Emet

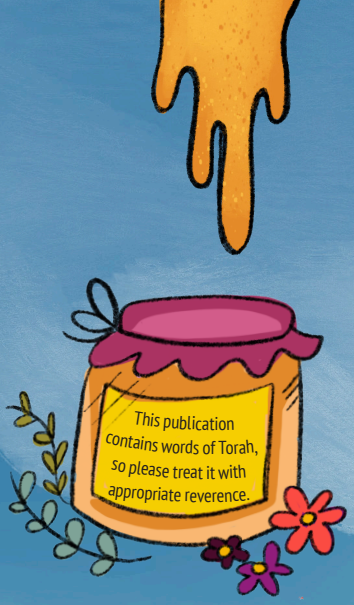
When it came to yetziat Mitzrayim (the Exodus from Egypt), that salvation began to awaken on Tu Bishvat, and became visible in the month of Nissan.

It's like the way trees work - you only plant them once, but then they bloom every year on their own. Even though all the leaves die and the trees dry up every winter, their inner freshness never stops...

That's why the Torah says "People are like trees" (Devarim 20:19) - this is God's way of telling us to never give up. Even if you experience a kind of failing (God forbid!), this is just the same as how trees sometimes dry up, but even so they eventually grow fruit when the time is right. A person should always remember this idea: that it's on Tu Bishvat that yetziat Mitzrayim is already awakening...

Sometimes, things seem like they're just going badly, and it's not clear whether they'll ever get better. R. Eiger is saying that the trees can give us hope when that happens. Every year in cold climates, their leaves die and fall off, and it's hard to tell from the looks of them whether the trees are dead or alive. In those moments, it can be hard to imagine that the trees will ever look green and happy again. All hope seems lost.

But the amazing thing is that, even then, the tree might already be starting the process of regrowth - even though it's impossible to see it from the outside! So the same thing could be true for us when we feel down. Maybe things are already starting to get better, even if it seems like they're not. That's how Tu Bishvat connects to Pesah - it's the time when the miracle of being saved was already secretly beginning.



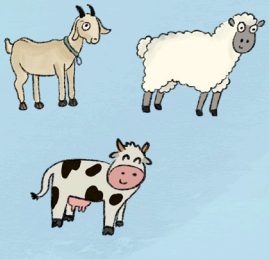

- How does this connect to marking a new year for fruit when the trees don't yet have any fruit on them?
- **Try it!** Take a look at a bare winter tree, with no leaves at all. Can you imagine the sap moving inside the tree? Can you picture how the tree might look in a few months, covered in leaves and maybe even producing fruit, with birds chirping around it?
- Could remembering this bring hope to you or people around you? How so?
- Have you ever felt like something sad or hard became a lot better without realizing it? What was that like?

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## בּוֹאוּ נְדַבֵּר עַל זֶה • Tell Me More About This!



What is Tu Bishvat? "Tu" stands for ט"ו, which has the numerical value of 15. So Tu Bishvat is the 15th day of Shevat.

According to the Mishnah, there are four dates during the year that are each called "Rosh Hashanah" (New Year) for different reasons, and Tu Bishvat is one of them.



### Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:1

### משנה ראש השנה א:א

There are four Rosh Hashanahs:

אַרְבָּעָה רָאשֵׁי שָׁנִים הֵם.

(1) The 1st day of Nisan is Rosh Hashanah for counting the years of a king's reign and knowing when the new season of holidays starts.

(1) בְּאֶחָד בְּנִיסָן רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לַמְּלָכִים וְלָרְגָלִים.

(2) The 1st day of Elul is Rosh Hashanah for grouping newborn animals together in order to give one tenth to the kohanim...

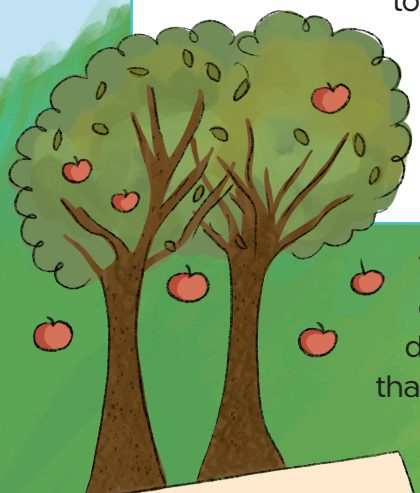
(2) בְּאֶחָד בֶּאֱלוּל רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְמַעְשַׂר בְּהֵמָה...

(3) The 1st day of Tishrei is Rosh Hashanah for the Jewish calendar, knowing when the shemittah and yovel years start, counting the first three years of a new plant (when its fruits are forbidden), and grouping vegetable harvests together in order to give portions to kohanim, Levi'im, and people who are poor.

(3) בְּאֶחָד בְּתִשְׁרֵי רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לַשָּׁנִים וְלַשְּׁמִטִּין וְלַיּוֹבְלוֹת, לַנְּטִיעָה וְלַיְרָקוֹת.

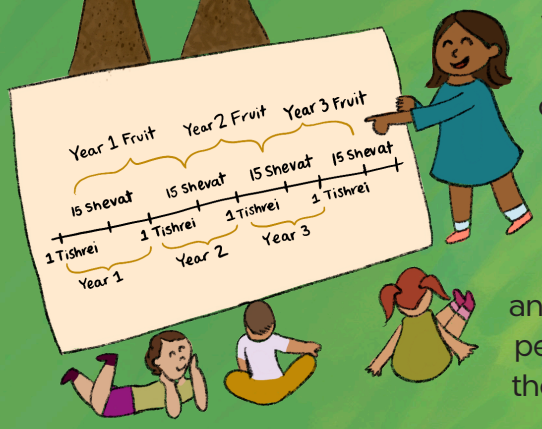
(4) The 1st day of Shevat is Rosh Hashanah for the tree—according to Beit Shammai. Beit Hillel say: the 15th day of Shevat.

(4) בְּאֶחָד בִּשְׁבָט רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לָאִילָן, כְּדִבְרֵי בֵית שַׁמַּאי. בֵּית הִלֵּל אוֹמְרִים, בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ:





This mishnah explains that we mark the ages of different things on different dates. Tu Bishvat is the date when we mark the age of fruit that grows on trees – that's what makes it a Rosh Hashanah for trees.




Why do we need to know the age of fruit? You can look at last year's Devash Tu Bishvat supplement for all the details! One reason we discuss there is that fruit growing on a tree three years old or younger is called עָרְלָה (orlah) and isn't allowed to be eaten. Tu Bishvat is the cutoff date for calculating when fruit is considered orlah. Another reason is that people need to give a percentage of their fruit as תְּרוּמָה (terumah) and מַעֲשֵׂר (ma'aser). These are gifts for kohanim, Levi'im, and poor people. Tu Bishvat is the cut-off date for calculating how much of these to give each year.

*Devash is a weekly parashah magazine that makes Torah learning sweet. By engaging directly with texts and taking kids seriously as Jews, Devash helps children (ages 7+) and grown-ups discover the weekly Torah portion.*