



Tu B'shevat, reap what you sow

This Tu B'shevat Perspective is also sponsored by, Eliyahu Ohr Ben Chana in honor of the Rebbe and the work of Lubavitch worldwide.

Today we are celebrating Tu B'shvat, the **“New Year of the Trees.”** The reason why it is a new year is that this is the time when the trees stop absorbing water from the ground and instead draw nourishment from their own sap.

We observe Tu B'Shvat by eating a new fruit, or fruit from the Seven Species as described in the Torah, which is abundant in the land of Israel: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates.

In Judaism everything we do has a practical aspect to it, so why do we commemorate the New Year of Trees?

We see that in the Torah, that man is compared to a tree of the field. Deuteronomy 20:19, talks about the laws when the Jewish nation is waging war against its neighbors, and it states, that when they lay siege to a city, they must not destroy any trees, *“for man is like a tree of the field.”*

Why is the comparison made between a man and a tree of the field?

There is a story of a person who was traveling to a far city, and during his journey, he witnessed an interesting sight. He saw an elderly person planting a tree. He halted his caravan and asked the elderly gentleman “what tree are you planting?” The man replied, “I am planting a date tree.”

The traveler was amazed, as it was common knowledge that a date tree takes up to 70 years to produce fruit. The traveler then asked if he really expected to live long enough to consume the fruits of his labor, to which he replied: **“I was born into a world flourishing with ready pleasures because my parents and grandparents had the foresight to plant for the next generations and now I plant for my descendants.”**

The reason we commemorate the New Year of trees is that we can take a lesson from it – a magnificent tree can grow from a small seed.

One small act of charity to the less fortunate, one smile to a person in need, one seemingly insignificant action can have an extraordinary effect and an immense impact on another person's life.

Additionally, trees contribute more than just fruit. They have health, environmental and economic benefits, providing clean oxygen and shade. They also produce sap, wood and create an inviting and calm environment for recreation and relaxation, they offer a tapestry of color and exciting form which changes throughout the year, signaling the start and end of the seasons.

There was once a man traveling through the desert, which was hungry, thirsty, and tired. He chanced upon a tree bearing luscious fruit with plenty of shade, and with a spring of water alongside it. He ate some of the fruit, drank some of the water, and rested beneath the shade.

When he was about to leave, he turned to the tree and said: **“Tree, O tree, with what should I bless you?”**

Should I bless you that your fruit should be sweet? Your fruit is already sweet. Should I bless you that your shade should be plentiful? Your shade is already plentiful. That a spring of water should run alongside you? A spring of water already flows nearby. There is one thing with which I can bless you: **May it be G-d’s will that all the trees planted from your seeds should be like you.”**

We are entrusted with one of the most sacred responsibilities, the continuity of the Jewish nation. It is not just a physical obligation, but rather a spiritual obligation as well.

We need to teach the next generation and set a positive example of what it means to be a moral human being, and more so, to be a Jewish person who is an integral part of the Jewish people.

We need to give our children the right environment in which to grow, whether it means going to Shul on Shabbos and Holidays, or participating in communal activities, to sow the seeds for the next generation of the Jewish people.

“The goal isn’t to live forever, but rather to create something that will.”

Happy new year’s trees!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini