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ISRAEL CORNER

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Branching Out: Celebrate Tu B'Shevat!

Dear Families,

Tu B'Shevat, known as the “Birthday of the Trees,” is a special holiday celebrated in Israel and worldwide each year.

Israeli families and communities come together to plant trees, enjoy fruits native to the Land of Israel, and show their love and care for nature. Children all over Israel celebrate Tu B'Shevat by going on hikes and planting new trees.

Even in Florida, we can celebrate Tu B'Shevat and strengthen our connection to Israel with simple, meaningful activities you can do at home with your children!



Celebrating a Tree's Birthday

Tu B'Shevat is the time of the year when trees in Israel wake up from their winter sleep and show their first buds. Fruits begin to grow.

Connect to a tree's birthday by getting your children to think about their own birthdays and those close to them. Everybody has a birthday. Ask your children:

- Why do we celebrate birthdays?
- What do you do to celebrate your birthday?
- How do you feel on your birthday?

Photos by [Johannes Plenio](#) on [Pexels](#) (top) and [Leslie Eckert](#) on [Pixabay](#) (bottom)

In the Jewish calendar, we see that not only do people have birthdays, but also trees have birthdays! Tu B'Shevat is the birthday for trees. In Israel, Tu B'Shevat is when the first blossoms on the almond tree can be seen. Because almond trees are the first trees to blossom, it tells us that spring is coming. Soon, we'll see new flowers on lots of different trees. This is a great reason to celebrate!

In order to celebrate a tree (something kids might not be used to) you can ask:

- How do you think we can celebrate the trees' birthday?
- What is your favorite thing about trees?
- Why is it important to take care of trees and plants?



Image from [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Taste the Fruits of Israel

Israel is known for its delicious fruits, like dates, figs, and pomegranates, which are part of the special **Seven Species: [Shivat HaMinim](#)**. A great way to celebrate Tu B'Shevat is to bring these flavors into your home.

Feel free to taste test some or all of these Israeli delicacies at your table. Honor that these **[Shivat HaMinim](#)** all come from Israel! Which do you like? Which is the sweetest?

You can also engage in sensory play; try some Pomegranate Art: First, cut a pomegranate in half and let your child explore the seeds inside (careful- the juice was used as a dye in ancient

times!). Then, use the seeds as stamps by dipping them in paint and pressing them onto paper. You can also use the halved fruit to create circular stamps for a vibrant, textured craft.

Recyclable Tree Art

Tu B'Shevat is a great time to teach children how to reuse materials from nature and make something new. Create a tree sculpture using recycled and natural items.

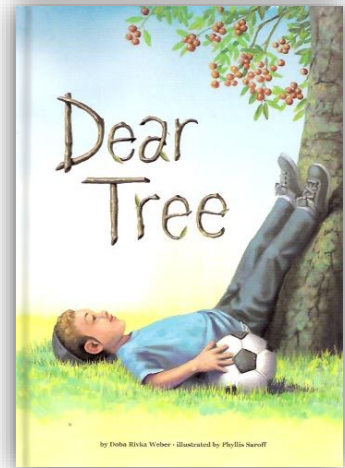
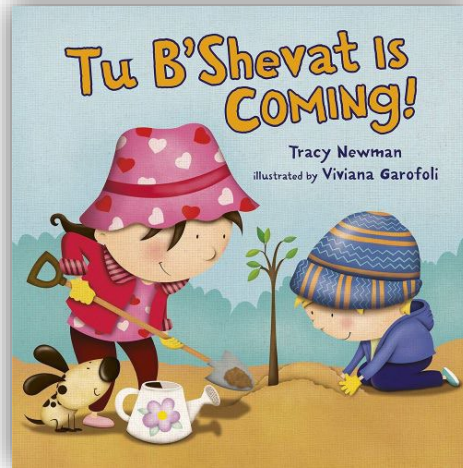
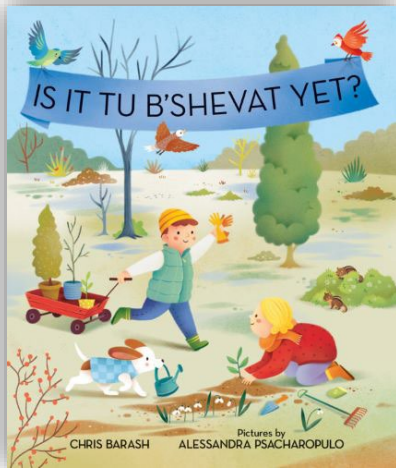
- 1. Gather Materials:** Go on a nature walk and collect sticks, leaves, and small twigs. Also, set out recyclable items like cardboard tubes, scraps of paper, or tissue boxes.
- 2. Create the Tree:** Use a tissue box or an empty toilet paper roll as the tree trunk. Attach sticks to it using tape or glue.
- 3. Then decorate it:** Add leaves, paper cutouts, or even crumpled brown paper to make branches and foliage.
- 4. Finally, you can display it:** Talk about how trees provide shade, fruit, and homes for animals, and display the tree in your home as a reminder to care for nature.



Photos from the classroom of Tova Fink,
[SAR Academy Riverdale, NY](#)

Selected Reading

Reading together is another wonderful way to celebrate Tu B'Shevat and deepen your child's connection to Israel. Here are just a few picture books to enjoy...



- [**Is it Tu B'Shevat Yet?** by Chris Barash](#) focuses on a family joyfully preparing for Tu B'Shevat as the seasons shift from winter to spring. Together, they savor fruits, discuss caring for the environment, and plant new trees. This heartwarming tale offers a delightful introduction to the holiday. [Click here](#) to listen and read along on YouTube.
- Enjoy [**Tu B'Shevat is Coming** by Tracey Newman](#) where a family, joined by their lovable dog, celebrates Tu B'Shevat, the joyful and kid-friendly holiday honoring the birthday of the trees!
- [**Dear Tree** by Doba Rivka Weber](#) is another wonderful picture book to explore in which a young boy pours his heart into a special birthday letter for his tree, wishing it all the blessings and joys for the year to come.

Tu B'Shevat is a time to celebrate nature, growth, and our connection to Israel. By planting, crafting, and enjoying the fruits of the land, you can bring the spirit of this special holiday into your home.

Wishing you a happy and meaningful Tu B'Shevat!

- Alana and Meir

[The Robert Russell Early Childhood Department of CAJE | The Center for the Advancement of Jewish Education](#) in Miami presents a new initiative aimed at enriching your children's understanding of Israel through engaging and thought-provoking content from a monthly article penned by two early childhood education experts: [Rabbi Dr. Meir Muller](#) and [Alana Gelnick](#).

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