

TU B'SHVAT: Celebration of the Trees

Tu B'Shvat: Jewish Arbor Day

Tu B'Shvat is an annual, Jewish holiday celebrating trees, nature, and the Earth. Much like the American Arbor Day or Earth Day, Tu B'Shvat is often used to bring awareness to ecological issues. This year, **Tu B'Shvat will be celebrated from sundown on Wednesday, January 24 until sundown on Thursday, January 25.**

What Does "Tu B'Shvat" Mean?

While Tu B'Shvat celebrates trees and nature, the name itself is actually just the date on which the holiday falls, much like how American Independence Day is called Fourth of July.

Shvat is the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar. **Tu** stands for the Hebrew letters *tet* and *vav*, which in Hebrew numerology have a joined value of fifteen. So, the holiday literally translates to *the fifteenth of Shvat*. The holiday is sometimes also called **Chag Ha'Ilanot** (the festival of trees) or **Rosh Hashanah La'Ilanot** (the new year of the trees).

How We Celebrate

Tu B'Shvat is not a religious holiday, rather it's a secular celebration of ecology and nature. Therefore, there are no specific obligations on the holiday, but there are some fun traditions that date back to ancient times. Hosting a Tu B'Shvat Seder (festival meal with rituals) and serving the Seven Species (*see page 3*) is a great way to commemorate the holiday.

Other Activities

As with most Jewish holidays, there are several songs that are commonly associated with Tu B'Shvat (*see page 3*).

Often, planting a tree or donating to an organization that plants trees is an important part of Tu B'Shvat celebrations. By giving your Jewish residents small flower pots and letting them plant a seed, you can help them participate in the tradition of renewing the earth.



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Bubbe's Corner

You can always count on Bubbe (Yiddish for "grandmother") for her wisdom, stories and Tu B'Shvat traditions. Whether you are a Bubbe or have a Bubbe figure in your life, spend time learning about the Festival of Trees. Be sure to ask your residents about what special things their families do to celebrate, and try to make them feel as at home as possible!

If you've had a child or grandchild in the last year, it's traditional to plant a tree in their honor— a Cedar tree for boys, and a Cypress tree for girls.

JNF, the [Jewish National Fund](#), raises money to plant an average of three million trees a year!



Tu B'Shvat is the designated birthday of the trees!

Tu B'Shvat was originally created to help farmers determine the best time to harvest fruit from their trees. The date was chosen to reflect the climate in Israel.

In the famous Tu B'Shvat story, a man found a world full of carob trees, and just as his ancestors planted for him, he too, plants for his descendants.

Important Terms for Tu B'Shvat

Hebrew...	It is pronounced...	It means...
Tu B'Shvat	Too beesh-vaht	The fifteenth of Shvat
Ilanot	Ee-lah-note	Young trees
Eitz/Eitzim	Aytz/aytz-eem	Tree/trees
Chag Ha'Ilanot	Hag ha ee-lah-note	The festival of trees
Shivat HaMinim	Sheev-aht ha-mee-neem	The seven species
Seder	Say-der	A Jewish dinner or feast
Boreh Pri Ha'Eitz	Bore-ay peh-ri ha'aytz	Blessing the fruit of the trees

Tu B'Shvat Foods: The Seven Species

Like most Jewish holidays, Tu B'Shvat celebrations center heavily around foods with symbolic meanings. This holiday features **Shivat HaMinim**, or the Seven Species mentioned in the Torah. These are various fruits, grains, and other produce that are biblically significant. Each food is said to represent a holy attribute or personality trait we should aspire to.

WHEAT

Wheat can be eaten in the form of bread, crackers, anything! It can symbolize material success.

BARLEY

At a Tu B'Shvat meal, barley can usually be found as crackers. It may represent *Shalom Bayit*, or in English, a peaceful home.

GRAPES

Grape juice and wine are staples in Jewish feasts and Tu B'Shvat is no different. Raisins can also fill the grape role, which can symbolize finding romantic love.

FIGS

Figs on Tu B'Shvat are often seen as symbols of patience. Enjoy them fresh or dried.

POMEGRANATE

Pomegranate is an important food in Jewish culture, as the number of seeds in each fruit are said to equal with the number of

commandments in the Torah (613). On Tu B'Shvat, they can also help us ward off gossip.

OLIVES

Green, black, or oil-cured olives are another staple of Jewish foods. They can represent righteousness and good deeds.

DATES

Dates, delicious and sweet, are nature's candy. They naturally represent health at Tu B'Shvat.



Music

Music is an important part of any holiday, and Tu B'Shvat is no exception. By playing some of the following songs for your residents, you can help them get into the spirit of the holiday. These songs are cultural, not religious, so some residents may have favorites not listed below. Ask them if they know any good Tu B'Shvat songs to play!



HASHKEDIYAH PORACHAT

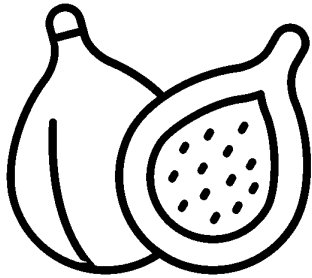
This song title translates to "the almond tree is blooming", a celebration of the spring foliage. The lyrics include the line "Tu B'Shvat is coming, the holiday of the trees!" making it the consummate Tu B'Shvat song. [You can find the music here](#) and English [transliteration of the lyrics here](#).

KACH HOLCHIM HASHOTLIM

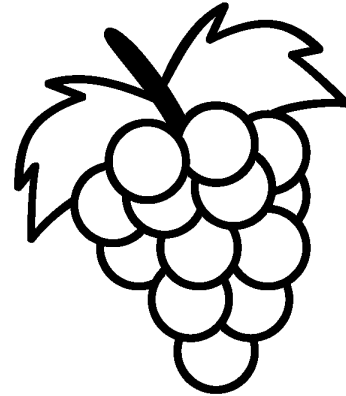
This song is about gathering gardening tools and going to plant trees! Enjoy this catchy call-to-action song by [clicking here](#).

The Seven Species

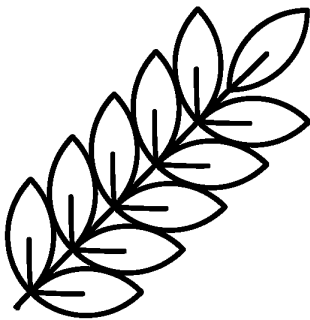
Of Israel



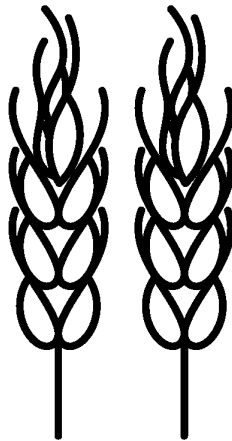
Fig



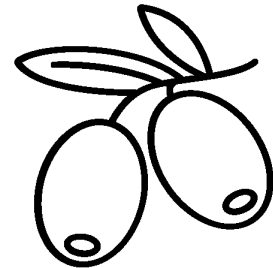
Grapes



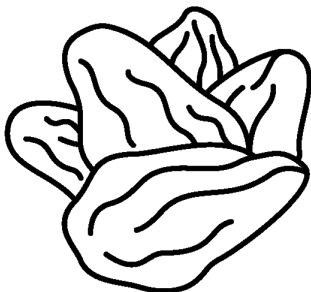
Wheat



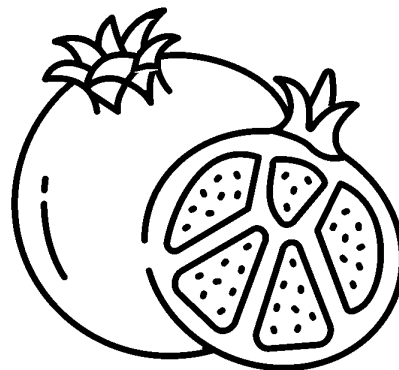
Barley



Olives



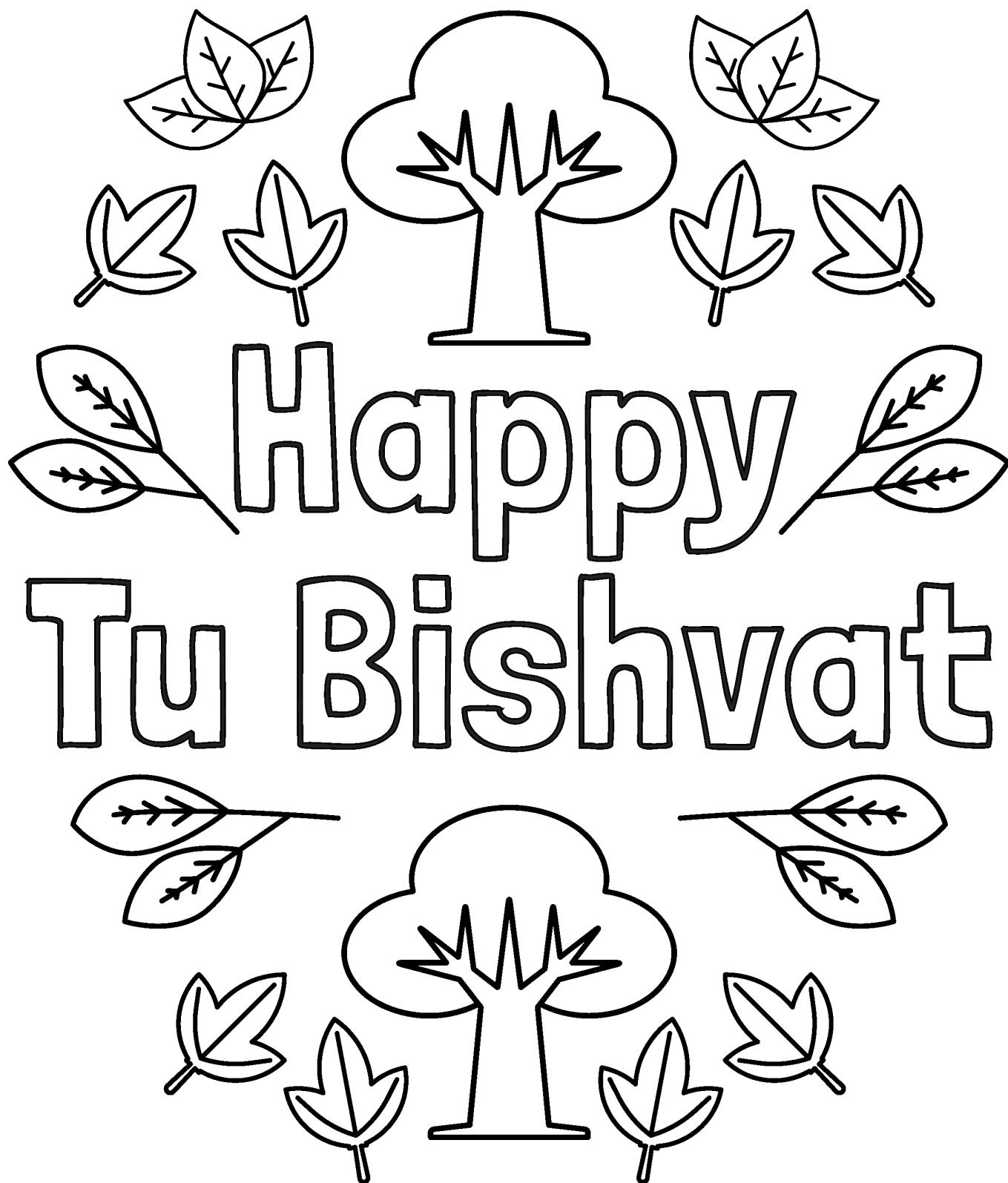
Date



Pomegranate



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Jewish Holidays Calendar 2023-2024*

HOLIDAY	DATE
Tu B'Shevat (1 day)	Wednesday, Jan. 24* – Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024
Purim (1 day)	Saturday, March 23* – Sunday, March 24, 2024
Passover (8 days)	Monday, April 22*- Tuesday, April 30, 2024
Shavuot (2 days)	Tuesday, June 11* – Thursday, June 13, 2024
Rosh Hashanah (2 days)	Wednesday, Oct. 2* – Friday, Oct. 4, 2024
Yom Kippur (1 day)	Friday, Oct. 11* – Saturday, Oct. 12, 2024
Sukkot (7 days)	Wednesday, Oct. 16* – Wednesday, Oct. 23, 2024
Shemini Atzeret (1 day) & Simchat Torah (1 day)	Wednesday, Oct. 23* – Friday, Oct. 25, 2024
Hanukkah (8 days)	Wednesday, Dec. 25, 2024 - Thursday, Jan. 2, 2025

** All holidays begin at sundown*

About JFS

JFS provides support, services and resources for individuals and families of all ages and backgrounds.

Our mission is to enrich the lives of individuals, families, and the community by providing compassionate, collaborative human services, guided by Jewish values.

Our staff has expertise in:

- Helping older adults maintain their safety and independence
- Providing resources and guidance to older adults and their families
- Private transportation to medical appointments and synagogue services
- Counseling and care management (JFS accepts Medicare.)

Support Our Chaplaincy Program

JFS provides spiritual connection and support for Jewish residents in long-term and elder care in the Capital Region free of charge, unlike most chaplains and programs arranged by facilities.

This publication and the visits and programs offered by our Community Chaplain, Rabbi Ami Monson, are made possible through donations.

Please consider supporting our Dr. Rela Mintz Geffen Jewish Community Chaplaincy Fund so that we can continue to offer this complimentary service:

Online: jfsneny.org/donations

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