



This activity augments the Rodef Reads selection for 2018-2019, *My Jewish Year* by Abby Pogrebin. It is designed to support at-home family celebration of the Jewish holidays.

## Tu BiSh'vat

Tu BiSh'vat is when we celebrate the new year for trees (especially fruit trees). It is considered one of the minor Jewish holidays. In ancient times, Tu BiSh'vat was merely a date on the calendar that helped Jewish farmers know when to bring their first-fruit offerings to the Temple.

In the 16th century, Jewish communities in Europe created a ritual of having a Tu BiSh'vat seder called the Feast of Fruits, which included fruits and nuts traditionally associated with the land of Israel. The early Zionists started planting trees on Tu BiSh'vat to restore the ecology of Israel and as a symbol of renewed growth and flowering of the Jewish people returning to their ancestral homeland.

In modern times, Tu BiSh'vat has become a broader ecological holiday and continues to be a time for planting trees in Israel and wherever Jews live. The holiday has changed and evolved over time, but can easily be seen as the first Earth Day because trees play important roles in some of the most challenging environmental issues today.

**When to celebrate:** Tu BiSh'vat begins the evening of Tuesday, January 30, 2019 and is celebrated until sundown on Wednesday, January 31, 2019.

### Activity 1: Plant Parsley

In *My Jewish Year*, the author suggests planting parsley to use in your Passover seder (which is only two months away). Even if you do not have a Tu BiSh'vat seder at your house, this is a nice link between the two holidays. As Ms. Peregrin says, you "can get in touch with the earth for one supper by planting herbs for the next."

**Preparation:** You will need:

- A packet of parsley seeds. These are widely available at garden stores, home improvement stores, and even discount stores.
- Potting soil and a flower pot
- Alternatively, Amazon sells an "Indoor Herb Garden Starter Kit" that includes everything you need.

**Activity:**

1. Spread newspaper on the floor or table to make it easier to clean up when you are finished.
2. Scoop soil into the pot and embed the seeds according to the instructions on the seed packet.
3. Water the seeds and place the pot in sunlight.
4. Water the seeds regularly (but not too much). As a family activity, you might want to create a "plant care chart" to divide responsibility for watering the plant so everyone stays involved.
5. Harvest parsley for your Passover Seder.



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## Activity 2: Short family Activities

Other Tu BiSh'vat activities to do with your family and friends include:

1. Take a nature walk in your neighborhood or nearby park.
  - Take pictures of trees. When you get home, try to identify each type of tree.
  - Make tree rubbings. Peel the paper from a large crayon, or use a thick piece of sidewalk chalk. Press a sheet of thin paper up against the bark of a tree. Gently rub the side of the crayon or chalk on the paper until the pattern of the bark shows. Compare rubbings from different trees.
2. Have a conversation with family or friends:
  - Have family members and friends say something we can learn from the various parts of a tree – roots, trunk, bark, branches, leaves, or flowers. For example, a tree trunk grows tall but is dependent on the roots and leaves.
  - What do you think it means to say the Torah is like a tree of life?

## Activity 3: Attend or host a Tu BiSh'vat Seder

On Tu BiSh'vat, the Jewish festival of the trees, mystics established the custom of performing a seder. We also eat various kinds of fruit on Tu BiSh'vat as part of a vegetarian meal that celebrates nature without the death of animals.

Temple Rodef Shalom hosts a Tu BiSh'vat seder each year. In 2019, the seder is scheduled for Monday, January 21 at 10:30 AM (This is MLK Day). The seder is free; please bring a potluck vegetarian dish for lunch. Register here: [\*\*Congregational Tu BiSh'vat Seder and Potluck Vegetarian Lunch\*\*](#)

### If you prefer to host your own seder.

You will need:

Copies of a Tu BiSh'vat Haggadah. Use one of the following or adapt ideas in them as inspiration to write your own:

- **Seder for families with school-aged children:** <http://hazon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/FamilySeder.pdf>
- **An adult seder:** <http://velveteenrabbi.blogspot.com/files/tubhaggadah-adults.pdf>

Each Haggadah gives instructions on what you will need to prepare. In general, you will need:

- Wine or grape juice (red and white),
- Fruits/nuts with a hard shell (walnuts, coconuts),
- Fruits with pits (dates, peaches, plums), and
- Fruits that are soft all the way through (figs, grapes, berries)