

Thoughts From The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Tu B'shevat — New Year For Trees

By Rabbi Yossi Groner

The 15th day of Shevat (corresponding this year to February 6) is Rosh Hashana for the trees, which is relevant to all Jews. The Torah states that "man is a tree of the field", and just as a tree's function is to produce fruit, so is the function of Jews to fulfill Torah and Mitzvoth, which are the fruit of a Jew.

Our sages tell us that on the 15th of Shevat it is customary to eat more fruits of trees. This custom is associated with eating fruits of Israel, specifically those fruits with which the land of Israel is praised. The Torah describes Israel as "a land of wheat and barley," and vines, pomegranates, and figs; a land of olives fit for oil and of honey (referring to date honey).

When we examine the festi-

val of Tu B'shevat, we find two puzzling facts, one in its origin and one in its practice. 1) We do not find this festival mentioned in the Torah. It is a Jewish custom to consider the 15th of Shevat as a "festival" 2) The practice of eating fruits of the land of Israel is specifically connected with fruits but not with grains of Israel. Why are the grains not included?

The distinction of a "custom" will be understood through a simple example. The difference between "wheat and barley" and "fruit of the tree" is that from the former bread is made, which is an essential staple for life. Fruit, however, is mainly to give delight to a person. When a person is hungry, he satisfies himself with bread — as it says "bread satiates the heart of man". After satisfying his hunger, he

eats fruit as a pleasant dessert.

So too is the distinction of a custom. The fulfillment of Torah and Mitzvot is an essential staple for our spiritual life. A custom, however, provides delight for the divine soul; it enhances the obligatory and also gives special delight to G-d.

Since the festival of Tu B'shevat is a "CUSTOM" one eats fruits of the trees specifically, for fruit produces delight for a person, as does a custom.

There is a lesson in the above for our service to G-d. A person's service can be performed as a routine, coldly, without warmth and enthusiasm. When Tu B'shevat comes, it teaches us to add and enhance our practice with pleasure and delight.

TORONTO (JTA) — Canada's new Conservative Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, named Stephen Lewis, a life-long Socialist active in the Jewish Community to be Canada's next Ambassador to the United Nations.

Lewis is the former leader of the New Democratic Party in Ontario which his late father had also headed. His grandfather was a member of the Bundists, the Jewish Socialist movement in Czarist Russia. Lewis is also a former chairman of the Histadrut campaign in Ontario and has lectured on the Holocaust in literature.

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