

Thoughts From The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Tu B'Shvat — New Year For Trees "Man" is like the tree in the field"

By Rabbi Yossi Groner

The Talmud teaches that Tu B'Shvat, (which means the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat) is the New Year for trees. This holiday was always significant to us since the Torah says that man is like a tree in the field.

Actually there are many similarities between people and trees, which give us an insight into the care and developing of the human being.

Trees are made up of three parts: roots; body, which includes trunk, branches and leaves; fruits, including its seeds. Now although all three are part of one tree, there is a clear distinction in each of the parts.

The roots are hidden underground, yet they provide most of the nutrients necessary for the tree's survival. Also, the root is the foundation of the tree, and the healthier the roots are the healthier the tree will be.

The body of the tree is the most visible part of all three, and it grows with more branches and leaves.

The ultimate of the tree is accomplished through its fruits, especially through the seeds of the fruit for only through the seeds can we guarantee the continuity of the species.

The same is true with people. In our lives we have three essential components: roots — faith in God is our link with the source of life, it exceeds even the intellectual, since faith reaches into the essence of our soul; body — that is the study of Torah, observance of Mitzvot, and doing good deeds, which takes up most of our time; fruits — the ultimate of the person is to produce fruits, that is, in addition to fulfilling all of his obligations, one must influence friends and his environment that they too should be good healthy trees, with strong roots and many activities, and most of all to be fruit bearing trees.

Tu B'Shvat



On Tu B'Shvat it is customary to eat a lot of fruit. Some even have the custom of serving 15 kinds of fruit, corresponding to the date of the month, and to the 15 "Songs of Elevation" (Psalms 120-134). The most desirable fruits are specially those fruits for which the Land of Israel is praised, namely: olives, dates, grapes, figs, pomegranates. A new seasonal fruit should also be eaten on this day for the first time in the year and the blessing *shehechiyonu* ("Who has kept us alive and brought us to this season") pronounced over it, in addition to the usual blessing for fruit. *Bokser* (carob) is a fruit traditionally associated with this day.



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