

Tu B'Shevat: Bearing Fruit for the Messiah

We don't often think of winter as a season for bearing fruit. Yet the Scriptures encourage us that fruitfulness is not based upon times and seasons.

Whether in season or out, we are to be producing spiritual fruit that testifies of the life of Yeshua. This fruitfulness is not based on a season, but is developed by abiding in Yeshua (John 15:5). A winter holiday called Tu B'Shevat reminds us of this type of fruit.

Tu B'Shevat is a minor Jewish holiday (meaning it's still a work day), and is one of four Rosh HaShanas' ("New Years'") mentioned in the early Jewish writings (the Mishna). Tu B'Shevat is the "new year for trees." The name, Tu B'Shevat, comes from the date of the holiday, the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat. This year it will be celebrated on January 25.

In the second Temple period, Tu B'Shevat was originally a day when the fruits that grew from that day on were counted for the following year regarding tithes (Mishnah, Rosh HaShana 1:1; Talmud Rosh HaShana 2a, 14a).

Influenced by these early Jewish writings, people in the Middle Ages started to celebrate Tu B'Shevat with a minor ceremony of eating different fruits. In modern times, Tu B'Shevat has become popular with many Jews (some think of it as Jewish Arbor Day). It is now customary to eat different types of fruit and nuts on this holiday.

Traditionally, these types of fruit are associated with the Land of Israel in the Hebrew Bible. These fruits include: grapes, dates, figs, olives, and pomegranates. There are also other types of fruit and nuts

included: oranges, bananas, walnuts, and pistachios (which have inedible exteriors and soft edible insides); dates, apricots, olives and persimmons (which have soft exteriors, but a hard pit inside); and figs and berries (which are eaten whole).

Though this may not mean much to some, we can learn spiritual truths from these four categories of Tu B'Shevat foods, as we as *talmidim* (disciples) develop spiritual fruit in Messiah:

1. Fruits and nuts with hard, inedible exteriors and soft edible insides – What a vivid reminder of our spiritual life in Messiah! While we are in this world, we often need to be “hard on the outside,” so to be resistant to sin and “*not conformed*” to the influences of the world (Rom 12:2). This is why the Scriptures often teach us to “*resist the devil*” (James 4:7; Eph 6:13; 1 Peter 5:7-9). On the other hand, since “*greater is He who in us than He who is in the world*” (1 John 4:4), we need to be soft on the inside, that is, yielded and responsive to the Holy Spirit while being resistant to the unholy spirit.

2. Fruits and nuts with soft exteriors, but with a hard pit inside – Here we have another illustration of our mature walk in Messiah. The soft exteriors remind us how we need to be loving to all, yet have a “hard pit inside.” We are not to be hard-hearted, but rather uncompromising in the absolutes of the eternal Word of God. This gives us the internal character of righteous integrity and an iron backbone to withstand the wayward winds of this world. How easy for our merciful “soft exterior” to be offended and hurt by the unkindness of this world’s system! Yes, our internal responses to the world’s attack of our testimony in Messiah can make “*the love of many grow cold*” (Matt. 24:12). This is why we need a “hard pit;” not a cold, hardened heart, but a heart firm in faith of His unchanging love in Yeshua.

3. Fruit that is eaten whole – As we mature, we enjoy all of

God's Word. New believers may think some portions of God's Word are difficult to digest (John 6:60). But as we press on in His eternal Word, we recognize that *"solid food is for the mature"* (Heb. 5:14), and that *"all Scripture is both inspired and profitable"* (2 Tim. 3:16). As we mature in Messiah's truth and, therefore, walk in the truth, may every area of our life bring *"praise to His glory"* (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). As the Passover Lamb was eaten whole and unbroken (Exodus 12:8-9, 46; John 19:36), so *"the Scripture cannot be broken"* (John 10:35), for the truth of the written Word reveals the truth of the Living Word.

4. Fruit that is associated with Israel – Maturity sees fruit that becomes less concerned with our personal agendas and more concerned with God's eternal agenda. Maturity for both Jewish and Gentile believers will further reflect the concern that the apostle to the Gentiles taught regarding the ministry of prayer: *"My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved"* (Rom. 10:1). This will become our own heart's desire as we grow to become people after God's own heart, like David who taught us to *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem"* (Ps. 122:6).

This is strategic in God's redemptive plan, as the Second Coming is tied to Israel's national repentance toward God and faith in Yeshua. For Messiah said of Jerusalem, *"You shall not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord'"* (Mat 23:37, 39). May our maturity in Messiah reflect the heart of the King of the Jews in having fruit associated with Israel!

This year, may we all mature as disciples who bear fruit that testifies of the God of Israel's love, fully and forever received in Yeshua, the Jewish Messiah and Savior of the world. Happy Tu B'Shevat!

Dr. Sam Nadler is a Jewish believer in Jesus who has been in Messianic Jewish ministry for over 40 years. Sam is the

president of Word of Messiah Ministries, which is bringing the Good News to the Jew first but not to the Jew only, and planting Messianic congregations in Jewish communities worldwide. To encourage and equip the body of Messiah in our shared calling, Sam is invited to speak in churches across the country, and has written multiple books on Jewish evangelism, discipleship, and the Feasts of Israel. For more information and resources, or to invite Sam to speak at your church, visit: .