

Turn Over a New Leaf! It's Tu Bishvat!

Tu Bishvat, the New Year of the Trees falls on Monday, February 10 this year. Although it is (a very cold) winter here in the United States, spring has already begun in Israel and the almond trees have started to bloom. Tu Bishvat occurs on the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month, Shevat. Children all over Eretz Yisrael, the land of Israel plant trees to celebrate. According to tradition, Tu Bishvat holds the same meaning for trees as Rosh Hashanah does for people. G-d decides how bountiful the fruits of the trees will be in the coming year.

While the ground here is too cold for planting, Nursery School students plant parsley seeds to commemorate this birthday of the trees. Tend the seedlings well and harvest them for your Passover seder plate. Many thanks to our Parent Association for providing the pots, soil and seeds for our schoolwide planting project.

You can also take part in planting trees in Israel by sending in your envelopes to the Jewish National Fund. This is a wonderful way to honor or remember someone special in your child's life. Our mitzvah of the month is planting trees. All classes will be emptying tzedakah boxes to plant trees in Israel.

This holiday also reminds us to care for the earth. There are two mitzvot we associate with this holiday: *Ba'all Tashcheet* (do not destroy) and *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world). During this holiday we increase our efforts to take care of the earth by saving energy or recycling. These family mitzvot (good deeds) instill in our children a feeling of conservation and care of our natural resources.

The custom of feeding the birds comes from a *midrash* (story). Making birdfeeders and remembering our small feathered friends in winter is another mitzvah you can do to celebrate this holiday. Help your child review the blessings for fruit of the vine (the bracha we recite on Shabbat for wine or grape juice.)

Many of our older children have also learned the prayer for fruit of the trees and fruits of the earth (vegetables.) If you need copies of the prayers with words in English, Hebrew and transliteration, stop by the Nursery School office.

Here's a fun recipe you can try at home which is sure to please....DIRT CAKE!

Cream one cup of sugar, ½ stick softened butter and 8 oz of cream cheese together. Mix 3 cups of milk and 2 small packages of vanilla pudding with a whisk in a separate bowl. Fold in 12 oz of COOL WHIP and then add the cream cheese mixture. Layer the bottom of a clay pot lined with foil with crushed oreo cookies, then your pudding mix.

Alternate cookie crumb layers and the pudding mix ending with crumbs on the top to look like dirt. Add a plastic flower. Use a clean kid's small shovel as a serving spoon. Use your potted dirt cake as a table centerpiece. This may be the ONLY time you let them eat dirt (cake)!

Chag Sameach (happy holidays), with love, Morah Mindy