

Tu Bishvat 2006

אַרְצֵ חֶטֶה וְשֵׁעִרָה וְגִפְנוֹ וּתְאֵנָה וְרִמּוֹן אֶרֶץ־זֵית שָׁמֶן וְדַבָּשׁ:

“A land of wheat and Barley, and grapes, and figs and pomegranate, A land of olive oil and (date) honey”.

Tu Bishvat is that special day in which we all get together to partake of the fruits and vegetables of the land of Israel, and celebrate our heritage through song and good cheer. Although it is admittedly, a minor holiday on the Jewish calendar, yet, at the same time, it brings some of our more critically fundamental beliefs into sharper focus.

On a basic level of thought, this observance reminds us to appreciate the great bounty of natural nourishment that G-d has bestowed upon all of his creatures. The Ribono Shel Olam not only granted us all, the gift of life, but he also provides us the means for sustaining it.

On a deeper, more mystical level of understanding, Tu Bishvat reminds of that day in the future, when we all will be enjoying our heavenly reward, our divine recompense, for all the Mitzvot which we have accomplished in this world. Naturally, when it comes to Mitzvot it behooves us to accomplish as wide a variety as possible, “for man does not live bread alone.” Indeed some Kabbalist, attempt to partake of 613 different fruits on Tu Bishvat, as a symbol of their desire to fulfill all of the 613 Mitzvot.

Perhaps on the more practical level of the “*hic et nunc*”, Tu Bishvat, is a day to consider the importance of eating a balanced diet each and every day. Nutritionists of all stripes teach us of the importance of eating our fruits and veggies. The basic elements of the food pyramid, can be found in each and every natural plant product. A simple apple for example, contains carbohydrates, but there are also minuscule amounts of fat, protein, and lots of water and dietary fiber. It wasn't until the 1700's that man learned how to extract pure sugar from beets and sugar cane, thus removing much of the beneficial vitamins and minerals, found in its natural state.

Perhaps this Tu Bishvat, we should all resolve to eat more “unprocessed foods” as G-d had intended, so that we may all live healthier lives “*biz hundert und tzvandezik!*”

Rabbi Kelman