

Welcome to a Year of Celebration!

Week 3: January 16-22, 2022

Celebrate Tu Bishvat

This year, we are focusing on who God is and how we can celebrate him and the life that he offers to us. We will draw deeper into a relationship with the Lord through examining his nature and desire for personal intimacy with us as his people, and we are going to do so in such a fun way! We are going to journey in 2022 through practical ways to celebrate various holidays! We will look at many of your favorite celebrations: Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day and much more. We will explore the historic, liturgical holidays of the year, learn about the Jewish festivals of the Bible days, and even consider some of the celebrations of other religious faiths. I'm so glad you will be on this journey with us.

In this packet, you will find some ideas for you to grow closer to God, your family, and others. Nothing is required. It is all for fun and your personal enjoyment and growth. There are enough activities that you could do one or two per day during the week if you want. If you don't want to do something, skip it. If another idea comes to mind, do it. Watch for God's abundant goodness and celebrate it.

Come Join Us as We
CELEBRATE GOD!



*"They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness."*

Dr. Patrick Wilson

(Psalm 145:7)

2022



Video Devotional

Go to Patrick Wilson's YouTube page and watch the video devotional for this week: Celebrate Tu Bishvat. Then, consider and discuss with your family/friends the following questions:

- Do you think Christians should celebrate Jewish holidays? Why or why not?
- What is an animal God created that fascinates you?
- Do you believe it is important to care for the world?
- What does it mean for you to be God's image bearer?
- How can we have clean hands and pure hearts when we worship?
- In what way(s) is God blessing your life right now?
- What "gate" do you need to let the Lord Almighty into?

Craft: Tree Fondue

1. Place chocolate frosting in a ziplock (or piping bag) and cut the corner off of the bag so you can use it to pipe the icing.
2. Generously dispense the icing onto a paper plate in the form of a tree trunk and branches.
3. Add the small pieces of fruit, marshmallows, corn flakes, nuts, etc., to add "leaves" or "fruit" to the end of the branches of the tree. For example:

- Pomegranate seeds, small grapes, or dried cranberries make a spring tree
- Sliced wedges of fig, kiwi, or apple make a summer tree
- Corn flakes or nuts make a fall tree
- Marshmallows make a winter tree

4. Dip items in chocolate! Eat and enjoy!

Supplies:

- chocolate frosting
- ziplock or piping bag
- paper plates
- small pieces of fruit, marshmallows, corn flakes, nuts, etc.



Foods to Prepare

Seder means “order,” and it is typically used by Jews to speak of the eating of a meal according to customs and in an intentional progression. Jewish Seders oftentimes include the retelling of a story of history and heritage through a series of hand washing, drinking, eating, scripture reading, prayer, and singing.

The Tu Bishvat Seder is commemorative of the Jewish mystics of the 16th Century in Northern Israel who recognized the creative power of God and used various fruits of Israel to symbolize their existence. Some passages of scripture that accompany the Seder include: Genesis 2:7, Exodus 3:2 and Deuteronomy 8:7-10, 28:36.

In a simplified introduction to the Tu Bishvat Seder, gather the following fruits and spend time eating them together as a family.

FIRST FRUIT: hard on the outside and soft on the inside (i.e. walnuts, almonds, coconuts). The hard shell symbolizes the protection of the earth and of our bodies.

SECOND FRUIT: soft with a pit in the center (i.e., peaches, apricots, olives, dates). These fruit symbolize the life-sustaining power of the earth and emotional strength from within.

THIRD FRUIT: soft throughout and completely edible (i.e., grapes, raisins, figs). These fruit symbolize God’s presence and our ties with the earth in which we live.

FOURTH FRUIT: tough skin on the outside and sweet fruit within (i.e., bananas, avocados, mangos, pears). These fruit symbolize the mystery of God, the scriptures, and the world.

Activity: Plant Something

While Tu Bishvat is a time of planting trees in Israel, it may not be the proper season to plant a tree in your community. Nonetheless, get your hands dirty by planting a bean in a cup, creating an herb garden, purchasing a cactus or plant for indoors, or rooting ivy plants in water to make more plants. You also might research what plants/trees grow well in your area and begin to set aside money to purchase them in the appropriate season.



Movies to Watch

If you are movie fan, pick out a favorite movie to watch alone or with family/friends. Here are some movies that focus on caring for the environment, but you certainly are not limited to this list. You might consider watching a documentary about creation care instead. Pop some popcorn, curl up on the couch, and enjoy the show!

Tu Bishvat Movies:

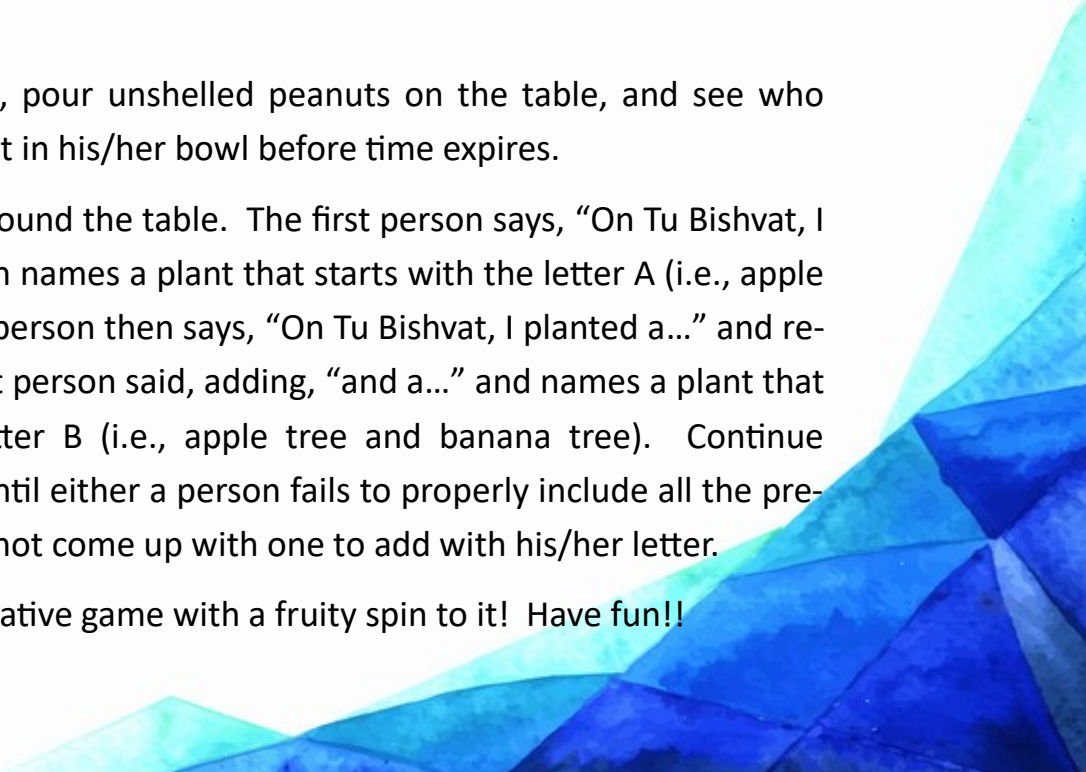
- Erin Brockovich
- The Lorax
- A Civil Action
- Happy Feet
- Yogi Bear
- The Day After Tomorrow
- Dr. Dolittle
- Woody Woodpecker
- Wall-E

Fruity Games

Put your own “fruity” spin on your favorite family games:

- Play “hot potato” with an orange instead of a potato.
- Have a race to see who can roll a lemon across the finish line first using only a stick.
- Blindfold everyone, pour unshelled peanuts on the table, and see who can collect the most in his/her bowl before time expires.
- Take turns going around the table. The first person says, “On Tu Bishvat, I planted...” and then names a plant that starts with the letter A (i.e., apple tree). The second person then says, “On Tu Bishvat, I planted a...” and repeats what the first person said, adding, “and a...” and names a plant that starts with the letter B (i.e., apple tree and banana tree). Continue around the table until either a person fails to properly include all the previous plants or cannot come up with one to add with his/her letter.

Make up your own creative game with a fruity spin to it! Have fun!!





Bible Study

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

In this well-known passage, Paul challenges followers of Jesus to live by the Spirit. As we surrender control of our lives to God, his presence in us increases and we grow to live a life that better reflects Jesus—his priorities and his virtues. In the above verse, Paul speaks of only one fruit (singular), so he is not referring to the following nine virtues as various fruits of living the Christian life. Rather, he is calling us to let the Spirit be what is fruitful in us.

When the Spirit of Jesus is the primary force in our lives, he will move in us in supernatural ways that will transform us to live beyond our own human limitations. Therefore, we cannot love like Jesus apart from the Spirit of Jesus loving in and through us. True joy is not circumstantial but centers us on God’s continuous presence no matter what situation we are in. We are made whole by the peace of God (not the world) strengthening our faith. We extend the patience (forbearance) shown to us by God. The Spirit teaches us what is kind and good and we live out his calling in our lives. We walk in the strength of God that enables us to be faithful even when tested and tried by others. We choose gentleness over revenge, judgmentalism, and condemnation. We strive to live in self-control, trusting God to control what we were never meant to carry. In all these ways, the Spirit of Jesus grows us like “...a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season” (Psalm 1:3).

How will you let the fruit of the Spirit of Jesus grow in you this week?

Prayer Time

A common practice among Jews prior to eating is hand washing. Many of us continue the practice for sanitary purposes. However, Jews say a prayer as they wash their hands: “Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us through your commandments and has commanded us concerning the washing of hands.” Say this or a similar prayer as you wash your hands today.



Service: Tree Care

Examine the trees in your yard or near your home. If you are a part of a church, club, or business, consult with the leadership of the organization to see about the care of the trees on the property. Tree species vary, so be sure to analyze the unique needs of the types of trees near you, but here are some general ways to help trees thrive amidst harsh winter conditions:

PRUNE: clear deadwood and prune tree limbs according to what is recommended for their species.

REMOVE LIMBS: trim, brace, or cable limbs that may pose a danger to your home, drive-ways, or walkways.

MULCH: add 2 to 3 inches of mulch around the base of the tree in late fall or early winter. Shape much in a donut rather than a volcano so the base can breathe.

WRAP THE TRUNK: fluctuating winter temperatures can cause sunscald, injuring the trunk tissue. Wrap the trunk (especially of saplings) with tree wrap under the lowest branches and remove when winter is over.

ICE MELT: avoid using ice melt products that contain sodium chloride near trees.

CLEAR BRANCHES: gently remove heavy snow deposits that weigh down branches, but avoid trying to break off ice buildup by hand. (Suggestions are from gardenerspath.com.)

Connect: Family Tree

Spend some time this week exploring your genealogy. Contact elder members of the family and ask them about their memories of relatives that have passed away, their childhood, and the changes they have seen over the years. If you have time and resources to dig deeper, go even further back through your ancestry.

As a family, make a family tree diagram or craft that depicts your family from the current generation as far back as you can or want to. Get the whole family involved in this fun and historical connection.



Worship

Carve out some time to listen to worship music, hum or sing along. Here are some great songs to get you started. These songs focus on God as the Creator of the universe. Look them up on YouTube if you don't have them in your music repertoire.

Pick your own songs and spend time worshipping and celebrating who God is to you and all the ways that he has blessed your life.

Tu Bishvat Worship Songs:

- Great Things
- Psalm 150 (Praise the Lord)
- All Creatures of our God & King
- Praise to the Lord (Joyful, Joyful)
- Indescribable
- God of Wonders
- The Stand
- How Great Thou Art
- All Things New
- God of All Creation

Challenge: Write a Lawmaker

Spend some time this week reflecting on climate change and its impacts on the planet. Study steps you can take to be a better steward of the world God created for us and future generations. Then, consider writing one of your representatives (i.e., city council, state senator/representative, governor, U.S. senator/representative). In your letter, introduce yourself, share your concern about climate change and why it is important to you, ask them to prioritize this concern and share about what you learned in your research, include your views on upcoming laws, and conclude with appreciation for his/her service. It may seem insignificant, but your voice matters.

"A Christian should resemble a fruit tree with real fruit, not a Christmas tree with decorations tied to it."

—John R.W. Stott