

RAKEL BERENBAUM  
TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR

## What's So Special About Tu B'Shvat?

So what's so special about *Tu B'Shvat*? Is it a "real" holiday or something else?

It is true that the *Mishna* calls it a "*Rosh Hashana*, a new year" for the trees. Yet it wasn't designated as a holy day, where we can't work, though we shouldn't fast or say *Tachnun* on *Tu B'Shvat*. So it is special in some way.

The *Torah* states "Take a tithe of all the seed crops that come forth in the field each year" (*Dvarim* 14:22) *Tu B'Shvat*, the "new year" for trees, determines when one tree year ends and the next one begins, for *terumot* and *maaserot* purposes.

It seems a bit funny that it has become a custom to eat lots of fruits on *Tu B'Shvat*. Didn't all of our problems start when the first man and woman ate a fruit from the wrong tree? Why remind God of how man sinned? Actually, when eating fruits in holiness, at a *Tu B'Shvat* seder, and reading verses and reciting blessings over the foods, it becomes a type of repentance and *tikun* for the sin of Adam & Eve.

Another reason for eating fruits is to acquire the special holiness of the *Shechina* that rests in the fruits grown in the Land of Israel. We see this in the after blessing, called the three-faceted blessing (*Bracha meen shalosh*) since it is a single blessing that summarizes the three scripturally ordained blessings of the Birkat Hamazon. There we

thank God "...for the good and spacious Land that You were pleased to give our forefathers as a heritage, to eat of its fruits and be satisfied with its goodness"

When we eat all the fruits it's also an opportunity to refresh our memory on the laws of blessings such as on which fruit to bless first. We can also focus on the fact that all our days are filled with so many things to be grateful for. Every delicious morsel and soothing drink provides us the opportunity to recognize and thank God and bless Him. As the *Talmud* tells us (*Brachot* 35a) "whoever enjoys this world's pleasures without reciting a blessing is tantamount to one who steals from God". *Tu B'Shvat* is also a perfect day to eat a new fruit in order to have the opportunity to add the blessing of *shehechyanu* on a new fruit.

So *Tu B'Shvat* is a new year for the trees, a day to do teshuva for the sin of Adam and Eve, to *acquire* the holiness of the fruits of the Land of Israel, to appreciate those fruits, and improve our intentions in all our blessings. May we all be worthy to see the fulfillment of the words we say whenever we recite the *Bracha Meen Shalosh*: "Rebuild Jerusalem, the city of holiness, speedily in our days. Bring us up into it and gladden us in its rebuilding and let us eat from its fruit and be satisfied with its goodness and bless You upon it, in

holiness and purity"

So while you're eating as many fruits from Israel as you can on *Tu B'Shvat*, here's a cabbage salad filled with fruits to go along with them.

### RED CABBAGE AND FRUIT SALAD FOR TU B'SHVAT

- 1/2 red cabbage (500g), cored and shredded or thinly sliced
- Red wine vinegar or cider vinegar
- 5 dried apricots, diced
- 5 dried dates, diced
- 2 tbsp. golden raisins
- 5 prunes, pitted and diced
- 1 tart, apple, unpeeled, cored and cut into julienne
- Pomegranate seeds
- 1-2 tbsps canola oil
- A number of pinches of cumin
- 1/2 tsp silan, or to taste
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2-3 Tbsps walnut pieces

Place cabbage in a bowl. Add salt, pepper and vinegar and toss well. Cover and let stand for about 2 hours. Drain all but 1 Tbsp of the liquid. Add the fruits. Add oil. Add remaining ingredients, toss well, taste and adjust to desired taste. Add walnuts just before serving and toss to mix well. ■



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