

## **A Tu B'Shevat Letter from the Past**

Greetings to the Darchei Noam Community from Israel! I am here for two purposes. I am presenting this week at the international conference of Neshama: The Association of Jewish Chaplains. And, of course, I am here to see my kids and grandkids. My wife and mother are here as well. We are actually expecting (as I write this early in the week) grandchild number 13 right here to our children R. Shalom and Bryna Ozarowski. I hope we will have good news by the time you read this.

How can one even talk about Tu B'Shevat in the Twin Cities where there are mounds of snow and cold temperatures for the foreseeable future (well, in most years, anyway!)? I found a direction toward an answer in a Dvar Torah that Shalom wrote when he was a senior in high school 16 years ago. It needed very little editing. I hope you will enjoy it!

May your Tu B'Shevat be a hopeful and warm one!  
Rabbi Joseph S. Ozarowski

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## **Pesach Preview**

**Shalom Ozarowski**

Tu B'Shevat, the new year for trees in Jewish law (Rosh Hashanah 2a- "Jewish Arbor Day"), is one of the lesser known of Jewish holidays. In the Land of Israel, it marks the very beginning of blossoming of trees and fruits unique to the country.

Viewed from a certain angle, Tu B'Shevat could be seen to foreshadow Pesach (Passover) and bears many subtle resemblances. For example, the whole idea of regrowth and renewal (which on Tu B'Shevat applies to trees) also has significance in the history of Pesach as its theme is the redemption of the Jewish People from Egypt, and their subsequent spiritual "regrowth and renewal". In addition, Tu B'Shevat marks the very first speck of springtime as trees begin to blossom for the first time annually in Israel. Pesach comes out smack in the middle of spring- also a reflection of regrowth and renewal, contained in the sunshine and pleasantness of the season.

Furthermore, the Torah Portions read around the time leading up to Tu B'Shevat are in fact the parshiot dealing with the Jews' redemption from Egypt! (B'shalach – the escape of the Jews and splitting of the Red Sea – is read this weekend.) These are the stories in the Torah that the celebration of Pesach is based on.

Another interesting similarity between the two holidays is the creation of a Tu B'Shevat "Seder," which was actually modeled after the one for Pesach.

So what is the point being conveyed here? What do all these connections between the holidays teach us about them?

One possible explanation is that there is a theme of nature interfacing with miracles (pointing to G-d's involvement, of course) implicit in both. Pesach focuses on the obvious, undeniable involvement of the supernatural, the twisting of nature by Hashem in redeeming the Jews and making us His nation. Tu B'Shevat, on the other hand, seems to relate to the natural cycle of the seasons and the environment. These two holidays, viewed in this way, can teach us that the phenomena that we see as "miracles," as well as what is usually seen as "nature" and ordinary physical occurrences, are one and the same – G-d's "activities" and work in our world. Although it is easy to declare Hashem's power over the earth after seeing the supernatural, it is important to remember that all that occurs in our physical world – whether it be the growth and blossoming of trees or any "natural" process of the earth – is affected just the same by Hashem, and is just as much a "miracle."

**Deep Thoughts – Resurrection of the Dead... in Trees!**

A powerful example of the reality described in the above Dvar Torah is the major concept in Judaism of "T'chiyat Hameitim," the Resurrection of the Dead. We believe that, in whatever way Hashem in His wisdom will cause it to happen, Jews will come back to life and walk this earth again sometime in the future (after the Final Redemption). At first, this seems to defy all human logic, but wait! Isn't that what happens to trees and plants every year?! Think about it: after the summer, many (annual) plants wither and die, then in the beginning of spring it starts to rain, and voila! The same plants that died the year before begin to blossom and regrow again! This happens year after year after year, and yet we dismiss it as natural environmental behavior. If it occurs annually to plants, why can't it happen to humans too? It is all G-d's doing anyway...