

# THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT BESHALACH

3-4 FEBRUARY | 13 SHEVAT

## Prayer & Tu Bishvat



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In this week's parasha, we see the beginning of the Jewish people's journey to freedom. This is possibly the longest journey ever - 40 years from leaving Egypt to entering the Land of Israel.

The Israelites, fleeing the Egyptians, reach the *Yam Suf* (Reed Sea) and end up becoming stuck. They have nowhere to go, the Egyptians are chasing them from behind and in front of them are the raging waters of the *Yam Suf*. They are in a tight spot with nowhere to turn and they are very fearful.

What is their reaction? They cry out to God.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 1902-1994) asks: Why did they cry out to God at this point? God had already promised them that they would be safe when He took them out of Egypt, so surely there was no need to cry out.

The Rebbe answers, quoting Rashi (1040-1105), that the Jews "adopted the practice of their fathers." The Rebbe explains that the practice of the *Avot* (forefathers) was prayer. The *Avot* davened consistently, prayer was a constant in their lives. When the Jews cried out at the *Yam Suf*, their cry was not one of disbelief in God's promise to save them. Rather, at this point they wanted to gain a closer connection to God, as their forefathers had done before them.

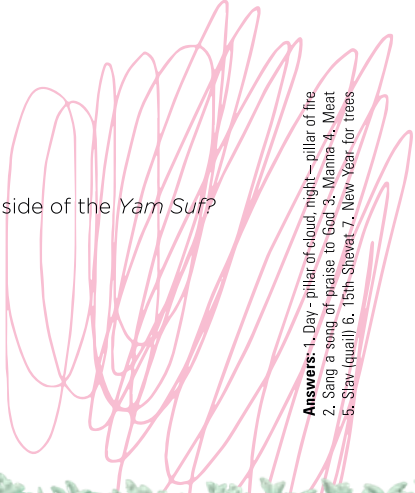
Tu Bishvat is the Rosh Hashana for

trees. Why do we celebrate Tu Bishvat in the middle of winter, when the trees have not yet started to show new signs of life? It is at this time of year that the trees start to receive their nourishment from the previous years' rainfall and from the soil, and this is the key to the trees' ability to grow and flourish over the coming months.

When the Israelites left Egypt, this was also a new beginning, the birth of the Jewish people. The nourishment of the Jewish people comes from Torah, *Avodah* (prayer) and *Gemilut Chasadim* (acts of kindness). By davening to God, not just when we are in a difficult situation but because we want to come close to Him, we are connecting to our roots, just like a tree which sources all its nourishment through its roots.

## Parasha Quiz

1. What travelled with the Jewish people by day and by night?
2. What did the Jewish people do when they reached the other side of the *Yam Suf*?
3. What special food did the Jewish people eat in the desert?
4. What food did some of the Jews complain that they wanted?
5. What food did God send to stifle their complaints?
6. What is the Hebrew date of Tu Bishvat?
7. What is celebrated on Tu Bishvat?



**Answers:** 1. Day - pillar of cloud, night - pillar of fire  
2. Sang a song of praise to God 3. Manna 4. Meat  
5. Slav (quail) 6. 15th Shevat 7. New Year for trees