

Over the past several years, I have created a series of what I call “tricky quizzes.” One of them was published a few years ago in *Moment* magazine. They are intended to test your knowledge as well as increase your understanding of some Jewish topic. I usually try to add some humor. I call them “tricky quizzes” because each question may have more than one correct answer and I have been known to write the questions or the answers in a way that will cause you to choose the wrong answer. Not only that but you need to read both the questions and the answers very carefully to choose the correct answer or answers.

This month I have here a quiz to test your knowledge of T’u B’shvat, what we usually call the Jewish New Year for Trees. The answers will be published in the next issue of the *News and Views*. However for those who you who have already added your name to our e mail list, there is no need to be in suspense so long. We will e mail the answers to the congregation in just two weeks! If you are not on the e mail list, please send us your e mail address and we will add your name to our list.

Put on your thinking caps, as one of my teachers used to say, and begin.

1. According to the Rabbis of ancient times, there are four New Year on the Jewish calendar. Which one is *not* a New Year according to the Rabbis?
 - a. The first of Tishre for counting years
 - b. The first of Kislev for counting Sabbatical years
 - c. The first of Nissan for counting months
 - d. The first of Elul for tithing animals

2. Tu B’shvat can be best translated as
 - a. The second of Shevat
 - b. The fifteenth of Shevat
 - c. The New Year for Trees
 - d. The first day of Shevat

3. Which answer has the correct sequence of Jewish months?
 - a. Abba, Ima, Ima, Abba
 - b. Tevet, Shevat, Adar
 - c. Kislev, Shevat, Nissan
 - d. Sheli, Shelach, Shelcha, Shevat
 - e. Kislev, Ramadan, Tevet, Shevat

4. A New Year for Trees was necessary on the calendar because
 - a. When the Temple stood in Jerusalem tithes were given from all produce. A New Year for trees allowed farmers to compute when the “tax year” began and ended and not confuse the tax on the fruit of one year with the next.
 - b. When King Solomon dedicated the Temple, he decreed that the fruit of the first and third years of the sabbatical cycle was in a special category and must be consumed each year in Machane Yehudah, next to the special store called Mazipan.
 - c. The residents of Jerusalem felt left out because all their neighbors celebrated New Year’s with big parties, and all they got to do on Rosh Hashanah was listen to a ram’s horn, so a new holiday was instituted.

- d. The Rabbis at the time of the Mishna (second century CE) interpreted a verse in the book of Leviticus that mandated a New Year for trees to count the years when the produce of trees could not be consumed.
5. According to the Talmud, this day is a new year for trees because
 - a. Until this point they are sustained from the rain of the past year, from this point on they are sustained with the rain from the water of the following year
 - b. the sap begins to rise inside the trees, because most of the rain for the year has fallen
 - c. in Israel the first crocuses begin to bloom and other wild flowers are about to bloom
 - d. The month of Shevat was lacking in holidays, and according to a Midrash, its complaint to God was heard and the holiday established in that month.
6. Tu B'shvat is literally mentioned in the following book(s) of the Bible
 - a. Leviticus
 - b. Deuteronomy
 - c. Isaiah
 - d. Jeremiah
 - e. None of the above
 - f. All of the above
7. Two products of Israel that are prominent in Tu B'shevat meals, even though they were not mentioned as the seven products of the Land of Israel in the Bible are:
 - a. eggplant
 - b. carob
 - c. oranges
 - d. almonds
 - e. hummus
 - f. watermelon
8. A custom developed of giving tzedakah in multiples of 91 (91 cents or 91 dollars) on Tu b'shvat because
 - a. the numerical value of the Hebrew letters that make up the word tree (*ilan*) is 91
 - b. In the Middle Ages 91 Jews were murdered by a mob in Poland on Tu B'shevat
 - c. The Rabbis believed that trees would yield fruit for 91 years
 - d. Rabbi Akiva once planted 91 trees on Tu B'shvat as a sign of his belief that that Romans would be defeated in the bar Kochba revolt in 91 days
9. The custom on having a "Seder" on Tu B'shvat was begun by
 - a. the Talmudic mystics who meditated on fifteen names of God
 - b. the followers of the founder of Hasidim in Eastern Europe, in the 18th century
 - c. the founders of the Aquarian Minyan in San Francisco in the 1960's
 - d. The mystics who lived in Safed in Israel in the 16th century
10. Tu B'shvat always falls on a
 - a. full moon

- b. new moon
- c. Monday (by an act of the Knesset)
- d. day when the Torah is read

11. Tu B'shvat is a minor holiday, but it is still a holiday therefore:

- a. The Fair Lawn Jewish Center/Congregation B'nai Israel morning minyan begins at 9:00 A.M. instead of 8:00 A.M.
- b. In some communities, students were given the day off from their studies
- c. Tachanum (penitential prayers) are considered too sad and are omitted from the daily services
- d. Hallel, psalms of praise, are recited

11. A Rabbinical statement says "Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai would say, "If you have a seedling in your hand and some says to you, "Here is the Messiah" – go and (choose the correct ending of this saying)

- a. take the subway to Crown Heights, Brooklyn and check it out
- b. drop the seedling and run to Jerusalem
- c. go and plant the seedling and then go to greet him
- d. immediately greet the Messiah

13. The term "*etz chaim*" (tree of life) refers to

- a. a tree in the garden of Eden
- b. the Torah
- c. the wooden rollers that the a Torah scroll is rolled onto
- d. the wooden stand that a Hasidic rebbe would stand behind when speaking words of Torah

14. Tu B'shvat is about one month before the following day

- a. the yahrtzeit of Moses
- b. Passover
- c. the fast of the 15th of Kislev
- d. Purim

15. In modern times, Tu B'Shvat became a time to

- a. plant a tree in Israel
- b. put money in a JNF pushke
- c. dress in white clothing and go out into the fields singing hymns
- d. take a branch of any type of tree that grows in Israel, shake it in the direction of Israel (east in the United States) while reciting a blessing and a Psalm