Time and Transformation
Bais Chana Online

The Month of Shevat

A. Names of the Month: שבט Shevat, 11th Month

a) related to שבט *shevet* – a staff or rod.

1)Rav DovBer Pinson: The Month of Shevat

The month of Shevat is like a rod with which we can break open the *Kelipa*/shell that conceals the spiritual nature of the food we eat, revealing the Divine wisdom and holy sparks within it. Every time we eat, we have an opportunity to elevate the sparks of holiness. Even on a physical level, when we are grinding food with our teeth – sifting out the nourishment from the inert matter, processing and absorbing the nutrients, and eliminating the waste – we are potentially elevating the dormant sparks of holiness. The key to this redemptive process is conscious intention, focused attention, and awareness of higher potential.

b) phonetically sounds the same as שבת Shabbat (the letters ט tet and ת taf are phonetically interchangeable.)

2)Rav DovBer Pinson: The Month of Shevat

During the Shabbatot of this month, savor your food slowly, blissfully and gratefully. This month-long practice of mindful Shabbat eating will develop and strengthen your ability to eat with consciousness and composure throughout the rest of the year.

c)Adapted from the Akkadian (Assyrian- Baylonian) name Shabatu.

B. Permutation of Hashem's name: Hey Yud Vav Hei

C. Letter of the Month: צ ץ *Tzaddi/Tzaddik*

Looks like a tree with spreading branches and deep roots.

3)Proverbs 13:25

צַדִּיק אֹכֵל לְשֹׂבַע נַפְשׁוֹ וּבֶטֶן רְשָׁעִים תֶּחְסָר׃

The righteous eats to satisfy his soul: but the belly of the wicked is always lacking.

4)Rav DovBer Pinson: The Month of Shevat

According to the Zohar: "The Tzaddik eats for satisfaction," which means that a Tzaddik eats from a place of satisfaction (Zohar 2, Beshalach, 62b). In other words: the Tzadik is already satisfied - from his prayer, study, meditation, and acts of generosity before he or she even begins eating. Therefore, the tzaddik eats from a state of spiritual holiness and fulfillment, not from a place of existential lack. This experience of lack leads one to eat for all kinds of reasons other than nourishing their body as we will now explore.

Often people eat to compensate for some uncomfortable emotion or psycho-spiritual hunger. There is a lack and they eat to fill their inner emptiness. People eat and overeat when they are feeling dejected and crave comfort food, or when they are feeling lonely and crave external stimuli. People who are nervous may eat to calm themselves, as the repetitious act of chewing can calm the nerves. There are also people who feel the need to fill themselves up after undergoing a deeper spiritual experience such as prayer or study. All of these types of eating are, for the most part, unhealthy and ultimately counterproductive; in the end, "the belly (still) feels empty." A Tzaddik on the other hand, is one who doesn't eat to fill an emotional need, but eats simply to feed the body so that he or she can have the strength to serve Hashem (Medrash Rabbah, Vayikra 34. Tanya, Chapter 29.) Thus the Tzadik eats the right amount of food at the right time, and feels equally satisfied, before, during and after eating.

D. Historical Events:

- **1st of Shevat** - Moshe Translated the Torah into 70 languages
- **15th of Shevat** – Tu B'Shevat - New Year for the Trees

5)Devarim 20:19:
כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה
Man is a tree in the field

6) Tehillim 1:2-3
כִּי אִם־בְּתוֹרַת ה׳ חֶפְצוֹ וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יֶהְגֶּה יוֹמָם וָלָיְלָה׃ וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שָׁתוּל עַל־פַּלְגֵי־מָיִם אֲשֶׁר פִּרְיוֹ יִתֵּן בְּעִתּוֹ וְעָלֵהוּ לֹא־יִבּוֹל וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה יַצְלִיחַ׃

But his desire is in the Torah of the Lord, and in His Torah he meditates day and night. He shall be as a tree planted beside rivulets of water, which brings forth its fruit in its season, and its leaves do not wilt; and whatever he does prospers.

Chassidic Dates on the Calendar:

- **10th of Shevat** –Yartzeit of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, 6th Lubavitcher Rebbe (1950) On the same day, one year later, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson assumed the mantle of leadership of the Chabad movement.

- **22nd of Shevat** – Yartzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (1988)

E. Element: Air/Wind

F. Mazal (Zodiac): Dli – The Pitcher (Aquarius – Water Pourer)

7)Bnai Yissaschar (Rabbi Zvi Elimelech Spira, 1783-1841):
The bucket is the mazal for the Jewish people because a bucket is used for drawing water. Water is a metaphor for Torah. Our mission as the Jewish people is to bring the wellsprings of Torah to the world, like the bucket drawing water from the well.

G. Tribe: Asher

8)Bereshit 49:20

מֵאָשֵׁר שְׁמֵנָה לַחְמוֹ וְהוּא יִתֵּן מַעֲדַנֵּי־מֶלֶךְ׃

As for Asher, fat (rich, delicious) is his produce, he will provide delicacies for the king

H. Sense: לעיטה - Taste

9)Tehillim 34:9

טַעֲמוּ וּרְאוּ כִּי־טוֹב יְהוָה אַשְׁרֵי הַגֶּבֶר יֶחֱסֶה־בּוֹ׃

Taste and see that the Hashem is good: blessed is the man who trusts in him.

10)Bereshit 25:29-30

וַיָּזֶד יַעֲקֹב נָזִיד וַיָּבֹא עֵשָׂו מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה וְהוּא עָיֵף׃ וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל־יַעֲקֹב **הַלְעִיטֵנִי** נָא מִן־הָאָדֹם הָאָדֹם הַזֶּה כִּי עָיֵף אָנֹכִי עַל־כֵּן קָרָא־שְׁמוֹ אֱדוֹם׃

Yaakov was simmering a pottage when Eisav came in from the field, exhausted. Eisav said to Yaakov, Please give me a swallow of this red [pottage], for I am exhausted. He was therefore named Edom [Red].

Brachot and Intentional Eating

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/278538/jewish/Food-Blessings-Brachot.htm

11)The Kuzari – Rabbi Judah Halevi:

The Rabbi: For the person who recites a bracha over everything they consume in the world and everything they experience, this strengthens and enhances the pleasure and satisfaction they derive from these things.

The Kuzari: How so? Are not the brachot an additional burden?

The Rabbi: Is it not the case that a more mature person experiences greater satisfaction in their food than an infant or an animal does? And that the animal enjoys it more than the plant, although the plant is continually taking nourishment?

The Kuzari: Indeed, it is so, because of the greater awareness and consciousness that the mature person has of their enjoyment. If a drunken person were given all they desire and, while completely intoxicated, would eat and drink, listen to music, meet their friends, and embrace their beloved, and be told of all this when sober-they would be perturbed by this and regret it as a loss rather than a gain, since they had all these enjoyments while being incapable of appreciating them.

The Rabbi: Preparing for a pleasure and its experience and appreciating the possibility of its lack doubles the feeling of enjoyment. This is the advantage of the brachot for those who are accustomed to saying them with attention and devotion. The brachot produce in one's soul a kind of pleasure and gratitude toward the One who has granted these pleasures to us. Because we appreciate that these things could have been withheld from us, our joy is all the greater.

12)Keter Shem Tov, Rabbi Israel the Baal Shem Tov:
This is the meaning of the verse (Devarim 8:3), לֹא עַל־הַלֶּחֶם לְבַדּוֹ יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם כִּי עַל־כָּל־מוֹצָא פִי־ה׳ יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם "It is not by bread alone that the human lives, [but by all that comes forth out of the mouth of G-d that the human does live]." It is not by the physical bread itself, without the arousing of its spiritual aspect, that the human being is vitalized... but rather, "by all that comes forth out of the mouth of G-d." Meaning, when you call forth the divine vitality within the food, by means of the brachah you recite over it, then "the human" in you, which is your soul, is nourished by the spiritual vitality within the food. For this was the divine intent when G-d "created worlds and destroyed them (Bereishit Rabah 3:7)": that sparks of holiness should be dispersed in the four tiers of creation for us to elevate.

This is also the meaning of the verse (Psalms 107:5), רְעֵבִים גַּם־צְמֵאִים נַפְשָׁם בָּהֶם תִּתְעַטָּף "Hungry and thirsty, their soul is enveloped in them." Here lies a great and awesome secret. Why did G-d create food and drink that people crave to eat and drink? The reason [for our craving for food] is that there are sparks of the original human soul that are embedded in the mineral, the vegetable, the animal, and the human elements of creation. These sparks yearn to cleave to holiness, and therefore arouse us to desire them... Every food or drink that we eat or drink contains sparks of our own soul, which we are personally charged to elevate. Thus, the above-quoted verse states: "Hungry and thirsty" – When a person hungers and thirsts, why is this? Because "their soul is enveloped in them" – (a part of the person's own soul) is imprisoned within the external wrappings (of food).

13)Proverbs 3:6
בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ דָעֵהוּ
Know Him in all your ways.

I. Body Part: קורקבן - *kurkavan* – esophagus (others translate it as stomach)

14)Talmud, Brachot 61:b
The Kurkavan grinds the food.

J. Parshiot: Va'eira – Yitro

- These Torah portions describe the process of redemption and receiving the Torah.
- We read about the 10 plagues. These harsh judgments were channeled through the **staff** (שבט) of Moshe.
- Moshe became the ultimate *"water pourer,"* transmitter of Torah to the world.