

Tu Bi-Shevat: Celebrating The New Year For Trees

Forget the snow and bitter wind -- the New Year for Trees, better known as the holiday of Tu bi-Shevat, begins this year on Feb. 6, or, on the Hebrew calendar, on the 15th of Shevat. On that day in Israel, where the holiday has also evolved into a day for the appreciation of nature, families fill the countryside to plant seedlings.

Despite the freezing temperatures here, families can still find ways to mark the holiday. To infuse a bit of spring into the day, the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York (BJE) offers a few suggestions for celebration.

For a background on the holiday, several materials are available from the BJE. For ages 3-8, the brightly-illustrated "Dates As Sweet As Honey" (\$3.95), explains the pilgrimage the Jews took to Jerusalem to bring a tenth of their produce for the annual tithe to the Holy Temple. As a result, Jews in the Diaspora form a vicarious link to the soil in Israel by eating on Tu bi-Shevat the seven varieties of food mentioned in the Bible: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates.

A Challenge Kit (\$2), for children ages 10-12, presents stimulating exercises to help youngsters understand the holiday, while cassettes and records of Tu bi-Shevat melodies and songs in Hebrew are available at \$7.95 each. For children or parents with a basic knowledge of Hebrew, a Tu bi-Shevat book is available for \$2.

Full color nature postures, produced by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, are also available at the BJE. Cost is \$30 for a set of 21 posters; and three small or two large posters for \$5.

How about a seder for Tu bi-Shevat? This little-known custom originates from the Kabbalist (Jewish mystical) tradition. The Kabbalists who settled in northern Israel in the 16th century, decided to mark the new year for trees by eating



To help families celebrate the holiday of Tu bi-Shevat, full-color posters, produced by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, are available at the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. Cost is \$30 for a set of 21; three small or two large posters for \$5. For a complete catalogue of holiday materials, call or write the BJE, 426 W. 58th St., New York, N.Y. 10019, (212) 245-8200.

at least 15 kinds of fruits and other foods which grow in Israel, accompanied by prayers and

passages from the Bible. To symbolize the changing of the seasons, the Kabbalists drank three glasses of wine: the first glass contained white wine, for winter; the second, a mixture of white and red; and the last, red, for spring.

A prepared Tu bi-Shevat seder is available from Seymour Hefter Jewish Community Center, 60 South River St., Wilkes Barre, Pa. 18701.

A practical, as well as joyous, idea for children is to adopt an Israeli custom for the holiday. There, children present neighbors and friends with plates of dried fruit. But if you wish to stick to the tradition of planting, here is a pomegranate planting project:

Remove the seeds from the aril (red pulp), and plant in a mixture of half-sterile soil and half-perlite. Cover with a quarter inch of soil, cover with plastic bag, and place the container on a source of warmth, such as the top of a radiator. Once the seeds germinate, usually within two weeks, allow a few plants to grow and pull out the rest. Place pot in warm, brightly-lit location, keep soil moist, and fertilize every two weeks. Pinch off top buds to allow for new growth.

For further information, and for a complete listing of holiday gifts, call or write the BJE, 426 W. 58th St., New York, N.Y. 10019 (212) 245-8200. BJE accepts MasterCharge and Visa on orders over \$15.

The Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York is a member agency of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, which provides human services and Jewish education to 1.7 million New Yorkers annually with the support of the UJA-Federation Campaign.

U.S.: Not 'The First Time' Jordan Will Buy Arms From Soviets

WASHINGTON (WNS) — the Reagan Administration appeared to shrug off the announcement by Jordan that it had purchased arms from the Soviet Union, reportedly shoulder-held ground-to-air missiles.

"This would not be the first time Jordan has purchased Soviet equipment," State Department deputy spokesman Alan Romberg said. "Such a sale would be consistent with Jordan's long-standing policy of purchasing military hardware from a variety of sources."

While Jordan has not disclosed details of

what it has bought from the Soviet Union, Romberg said "The reported sale appears to be consistent with previous purchases and does not appear to represent any fundamental change in Jordan's traditional defense procurement practices."

King Hussein has made no secret that he was seeking missiles from the USSR after the Reagan Administration, last March, withdrew a proposal to sell 1,600 Stinger shoulder-held ground-to-air missiles to Jordan and 1,200 to Saudi Arabia, because of strong opposition to the sale in Congress.

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