

Walking Meditation for Tu BiSh'vat

All living creatures are dependent on the oxygen produced by trees: “On average, one tree produces nearly 260 pounds of oxygen each year. Two mature fruit trees can provide enough oxygen for a family of four” (Environment Canada). Even before sophisticated technology and scientific innovations, people knew that they must work to preserve trees, and to honor their role in human existence.

We find rules and regulations for how to care for trees throughout the Torah, and the rabbis created a special blessing for the times we see blossoming fruit trees: “Nothing is lacking from God’s world and God created good creations and good trees for the benefit of man.” Trees hold a special status in Judaism, not only for the physical nourishment they can provide, but for their spiritual power too.

The month of Shevat is all about potential. We celebrate the signs and promise of spring amidst the continuation of winter. As we navigate the ongoing challenges of our lives, there are ever within us and surrounding us so many seeds of renewal and hope. When we take moments to renew our spirit and connect with a power greater than ourselves, we plant seeds of healing along our live path and within our community.

To practice pausing, really pausing, on your next neighborhood stroll, walk at White Rock Lake or Cedar Ridge State Park. The goal is not to cover physical distance or count your steps. The goal is to expand your spiritual sight line. So, here are a few tips as you venture out—

1. Make sure your phone is silenced. Start your walk with a series of deep breath. Close your eyes for a moment and just listen to the sounds around you. After opening your eyes, take a few steps and feel the ground beneath your feet, the bark of a tree. Then look up at the canopy of trees or the brilliant sky.
2. After walking for a time, find a place you can sit. Close your eyes for a moment and listen to the sounds around you again. After opening your eyes, see where your eyes rest. Do you notice something you may have overlooked before or didn’t notice initially?
3. Try this practice of pausing a few times on your walk—enjoy!
4. You may want to close your walk with the following prayer:

Makor Habracha, Makor Hachayim
Source of Blessing, Source of Life
Inspire me to open my heart to others,
As I continue to discover
a sense of home and community.

Makor Habracha, Makor Hachayim
Source of Blessing, Source of Life
May I flourish in this new year of the tress,
As I nurture the garden of my mind and soul.