

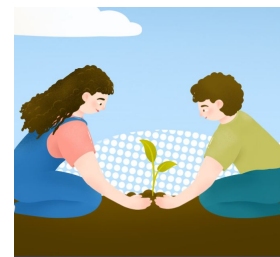


שבט תשפ"ב | January 2022

## חגים ומועדים: ט"ו בשבט

### Holidays and Occasions: Tu BiShvat

#### עץ ואילן – Two words for 'tree'



In honor of **ט"ו בשבט**, the New Year for trees celebrated on the 15th of Shvat, we ask: How did Hebrew come to have two words for 'tree' – **עץ** (*ets*) and **אילן** (*ilan*)? What's the difference between them? In *Semantic Aspects of Hebrew*, Gad B. Sarfatti explains:

In the Bible the word **עץ** means not only 'tree,' as in **עץ החיים** ('the tree of life'), but also 'wood,' as in **עץ קלי** ('wood utensil'). **אילן** does not occur in Biblical Hebrew.

Rabbinic Hebrew distinguishes 'tree' from 'wood' by reserving **עץ** for 'wood' and using the Aramaic loanword **אילן** for 'tree.' The Mishna therefore calls the New Year for trees **ראש השנה לאילן**. However, in the blessings the rabbis deliberately used Biblical vocabulary, so the Mishna says that "on the fruit of the **אילן** one says **בורא פרי העץ**" (Brakhot 6:1).

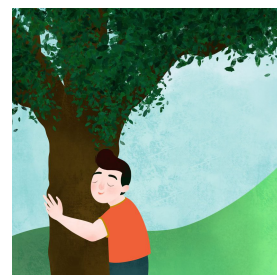
In contemporary Hebrew **עץ** has reverted to serving for both 'wood' and 'tree,' as in Biblical Hebrew; **אילן** is used for 'tree' primarily in flowery Hebrew or in expressions and fixed phrases, such as **חג האילנות** ('the Tree Festival') – another name for Tu BiShvat. **אילן** also serves in contemporary Hebrew as a first name for boys and has inspired the feminized forms **אילנה** (*Ilana*) and **אילנית** (*Ilanit*) for girls.

קראו עוד באתר האקדמיה כאן.

## מטבעות לשון

### Idioms and Expressions

#### כי האדם עץ השדה



Two Talmudists, the story goes, were walking to the river for a swim, when one suddenly stopped in disappointment. "What's the matter?" the other asked.

"Danger! No swimming allowed," said the first, pointing to a sign.

"Not at all," replied the other. "It says, 'Danger? No! Swimming allowed.'"

\* \* \*

The words **כי האדם עץ השדה** from Deut. 20:19 have similarly spawned contradictory interpretations (not in jest). The verse enjoins:

כִּי־תצור אֶל־עיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְשָׁהּ, לֹא־תִשְׁחִית אֶת־עֵצָהּ לִבְנֹת עָלֶיהָ גֵרְזֵן, כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכַל, וְאַתָּה לֹא תִכְרַת: **כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה** לְבַא מִפְּנֵיךְ בַּמְצוֹר:

The usual reading of the verse construes the last clause as a rhetorical question:

"When you besiege a city a long time in fighting it to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees, putting an ax to them, for you may eat of them, and you shall not cut them down; **for is the tree of the field a person** to be besieged by you [literally: to come before you in the siege]?"

In this understanding, the clause **כי האדם עץ השדה** contrasts trees (specifically, trees bearing edible produce) and people, saying that trees are *not* like people.

In contemporary Hebrew, though, the clause has taken on a very different meaning: detached from the context of the verse, it serves as a declarative statement likening people to trees. Israeli poet Natan Zach uses the clause this way in the lyrics of the famous song **כי האדם עץ השדה**, which compares people to trees and vice versa (listen to it [here](#)).

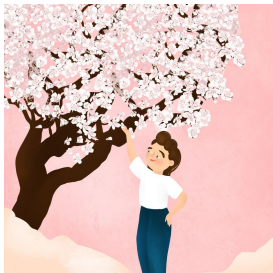
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### שמות ומשמעות

#### What's in a Name?

Shakéd – שָׁקֵד



### הידעתם?

#### Did you know?

Shmitta – שְׁמִטָּה



The word **שקד** ('almond') denotes both the tree and its fruit. In contemporary spoken Hebrew, though, **שקד** generally refers to the fruit, while the tree goes by the name **שקדיה** popularized by the children's Tu BiShvat song **השקדיה פורחת** ("The Almond Tree is Blooming"; listen to it [here](#)). In Israel Tu BiShvat often coincides with the flowering of the beautiful pink and white almond blossoms.

Whereas the word **שקדיה** is just a century old, the word **שקד** dates from antiquity and has cognates in other ancient Semitic languages. Gen. 43:11 names almonds as an item of local produce from Canaan.

In the Bible we also find the verb **שקד**, which Jeremiah 1:11–12 links to **שקד**. The Biblical **שקד** means 'to be alert and act quickly, attend [to something]' – and, indeed, the almond is one of the first deciduous trees to blossom, coming into bloom in late winter. In Rabbinic Hebrew **שקד** also means 'to work diligently and studiously'; from this meaning comes the word **שקדן** ('industrious person').

Plant names have long provided a source of Hebrew first names; Biblical examples include **תמר** (*tamar*, 'date, date-palm') and **אֶרֶן** (*oren*, 'pine'). The list has grown in recent generations, and in the last few decades **שקד** has become a popular first name for both boys and girls. Additionally, surnames containing "Mandel" ('almond' in German and Yiddish) have sometimes been Hebraicized to **שקד** or **שקדי**.

על שקד קראו עוד כאן. על שקדייה קראו עוד כאן.

In the Hebrew calendar, every seventh year is a sabbatical year, during which the Bible requires canceling debts, letting the land lie fallow, and forfeiting its produce for all to partake of. Jewish law forbids trading in sabbatical-year produce or wasting it. This year (5782) is a sabbatical year.

The Bible refers to the sabbatical year by a variety of names:

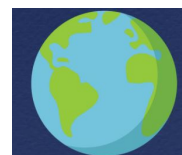
- **שנת השמטה** or **שנת השמטה** ('the *shmitta* year'). These names, still used today, are related to the transitive verbs **שמט** and **השמט**, both of which mean 'to release, leave [alone], let be' – in this case, to release debts and to leave the land alone.
- **שנת השבע** or **השנה השביעית** or simply **השביעית** ('the seventh [year]'). Rabbinic Hebrew drops the definite article: **שביעית**. This name remains in use today, as in **פירות שביעית** ('fruit of the seventh [year]') and **קדשת שביעית**, a term for the special status ('holiness') of sabbatical-year produce.
- **שבת** ('sabbath'), **שבת שבתון** (used in the Bible also to refer to the Sabbath day and Yom Kippur), or **שנת שבתון** ('sabbatical year'). These appellations, found in Lev. 25, emphasize the aspect of rest for the land. In contemporary Hebrew **שנת שבתון** denotes the sabbatical year of teachers and lecturers.

קראו עוד באתר האקדמיה כאן.

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## Timely Terms – מנחים לענין

### קיימות – Sustainability



The abstract noun **קיימות** is derived from the adjective **קיים** ('existing'). Their root, **קו"ם**, also underlies the Hebrew for 'sustainable': **בִּרְקִימָה** ('capable of stable existence'), **מְקִימֵ סְבִיבָה** ('environment-sustaining'), or simply **מְקִימֵ**.

View the Academy's dictionary of environmental terms [here](#).

ראו עוד מונחי איכות הסביבה במילון האקדמיה כאן.

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## חדשות וארועים – News and Events



## יום הלשון העברית תשפ"ב Hebrew Language Day 5782

Tens of thousands of Hebrew enthusiasts worldwide celebrated Hebrew Language Day (established by the Israeli government and observed annually, this year on Dec. 23) through the Academy's special events and activities, such as a Hebrew competition; a vote for word of the year; a survey of favorite expressions; and workshops and talks.

For Hebrew Language Day the Academy also produced a new set of humorous posters (for sale [here](#)) and provided on its website, free of charge, a wealth of content, including quiz challenges, videos, and lesson plans. The poster set sold over a thousand copies, destined mostly for schools in Israel and abroad.

This year's initiatives also included, for the first time, a love song to the language: **שיר בעברית** ("A Hebrew Song"), performed by the Shalva band and Jimbo J (Omer Havron). Watch the video [here](#).

ראו עוד על יום הלשון העברית [כאן](#).



## האקדמיה בקנסי הקהלה הישראלית-אמריקנית The Academy at the IAC Summit

The Academy made a splash at the National Summit of the Israeli-American Council, held on Dec. 9–11 in Florida. Prof. Moshe Bar-Asher, president of the Academy, spoke to a packed hall at a session about Hebrew in the 21st century. The Academy also set up a booth showcasing its poster sets, games, books, activities, and online presence. Both the talk and the booth received positive feedback, and the Academy gained wide exposure and made new contacts that may lead to fruitful collaborations.

## מנוה האקדמיה – מיזם בבנייה ירוקה The *Minve*: An Eco-Conscious Project

In building its new home, the *Minve*, the Academy aims to meet a rigorous standard of green construction, as defined by rating systems such as LEED and WELL. The design of the *Minve* has an airy, open feel and includes a rooftop promenade and garden with lookouts. The Academy hopes to inaugurate the *Minve* in six years.

Learn more about the *Minve* [here](#).  
To support the building fund, click [here](#).

קראו עוד על תוכנית המנווה [כאן](#).

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