



The Day After Tu B'Shvat

There is a strange irony in celebrating trees at a time when there is so little, on the bough to celebrate.

The prosaic explanation is that the New Year for Trees is a matter of accounts – trees need to be assessed for tithing and Orlah (forbidden-to-eat fruit in the first years of a tree's life), and the best time to assess when a tree moves from one year into the next is when there are no tiny saplings or leafy profusions to confuse matters.

But the romantic notion, and it's good to celebrate the romantic, is that we count at a time when life is fragile yet of potential. It's light now, as I get up. The darkest days are behind us. There are still no leaves on the hazel tree outside our home but, just this week, tiny yellow flowers have emerged to give hope that spring is on the way. I smile. My other favourite marker of the season is the bush at the office entrance to the Synagogue; gnarled spindles for the past few months it too is budding, hopeful at the coming of brighter days. Counting at this time of year is really about counting hope. Celebrating the accounting of trees as a religious festival of joy is really about training our faith around the passage of the seasons; there is a time for everything, following the darkness will come light.

To count at a time of plenty risks losing sight of true value. Plenty habituates our senses and dulls our ability to be amazed at the world. To count at a time of maximum darkness feels almost unfair – but we can count on hope.

Happy Birthday, dear trees. Happy (day after) Tu B'Shvat to the rest of us, Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Jeremy

Holocaust Memorial Day

Saturday 27th of January is Holocaust Memorial Day. We sent out a note yesterday with details of our marking of this occasion at New London, including welcoming our member, Holocaust Survivor Hannah Lewis MBE who will be speaking in the sermon slot NEXT Shabbat, 3rd February. More [here](#)