



## ***Tu BiSh'vat, Israel and me***

*A short article written by EIE Spring 09 alum, Sarah Shuster*

When I first arrived in Israel it was dark. I blindly was driven to Kibbutz Tzubah completely jet lagged and exhausted. All I could think about was the bed and shower that awaited me. When I woke up the next day the sun was pouring through my window and I happily walked to my balcony. The view was astounding; I cannot even describe the beauty. There were such a variety of plants and colors. As I traveled throughout Israel it amazed me how different every region was, especially for a country that small. I have never experienced so much diversity in landscape in such a short time period.

As Tu BiSh'vat is approaching, I cannot help but think of the time I spent in Israel. At this time the almond trees will be blossoming and many Jewish people all over the world will be celebrating this 'Birthday of the trees'. All will eat fruits and nuts while many more will have a Tu BiSh'vat Seder. However, Tu BiSh'vat is not only a holiday that connects us to other Jews, it is a day that connects us to Israel. When I taste the almonds this year I will think of the beautiful trees and the time I spent there. Furthermore, it is the time when many people decide to plant trees in Israel to help beautify Israel and give us a connection to this special place.

Another thing I found special to Israel was its form government. At first the idea of a Knesset confused me. Now, I am nowhere near an expert on Israeli politics or how the government works but I do understand that there are many voices and opinions that are part of this complicated government. With 120 seats and all of these opinions it is bound to be unstable. Even so, the fact that there is a place for opinions from people of all different backgrounds amazes me and I think that without this kind of government Israel would not be the place it is today.

Tu BiSh'vat and the Knesset are two of many things that make Israel very special. The anniversary of the formation of the Knesset and Tu BiSh'vat both deserve recognition and appreciation because they make Israel so special.