Deep Roots in the Dudaim Forest
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Abraham, whom we call *Avraham Avinu* - Abraham our father- was the first patriarch of the Jewish people. His journey to the Land of Israel, the land G-d promised him, began a relationship that we, his descendants, continue to this day.

The Torah tells us that Abraham planted an *eshel* in Be'er Sheva (Genesis 21:33). Our Sages explain that this *eshel* was either an orchard or a place of hospitality (Talmud: Sotah 10a).

Abraham and his wife Sarah championed the mitzvah of *hachnasat orchim*, welcoming guests. The Torah describes their incredible hospitality when travelers arrived at their tent (Genesis 18:1-8). The Talmud further relates that Abraham provided food and drink and encouraged his guests to thank G-d for what they had received (Sotah 10a–10b).

Our commentators also interpret *eshel* - אשל as an acronym for *achila* - **אכילה** (food), *shtiya*- **שתיה** (drink), and *levaya* -**לויה** (escorting guests on their way)—a reminder that hospitality includes caring for people from their arrival until their departure (Radak on Genesis 21:33).

Through their hospitality, Abraham and Sarah brought blessing to others. Travelers arriving tired and hungry found nourishment and an invitation to appreciate the source of the blessings in their lives.

This Tu B'Shvat, KKL-JNF will be planting in Duda'im Forest in the Be'er Sheva region. How meaningful that we are planting in the same area where our ancestor Abraham planted his *eshel* thousands of years ago.

Sustaining life in the Negev has always required effort. Now we face an additional challenge: climate change, which is contributing to the drying out of trees across Israel.

KKL-JNF's Forestry Division has determined that extensive restoration, including new tree plantings, is needed in the Duda'im Forest.

This Tu B'Shvat, we have an opportunity to carry Abraham's example forward: to deepen and strengthen our roots in the Land of Israel, and to nurture forests that will provide shade, beauty, and blessing for all who pass through them.