

In 2021 Tu B'Shvat is on the evening of January 27th and daytime of January 28th - Traditions and ideas to think about are in this letter.

Chodesh Shvat 5780 - January 2021

Shalom u'Vrachah to all.

Tu B'Shvat is fast approaching.

Last year, on February 9th, 2020, we were so blessed to be able to share together, as one community, the Holiday of Tu B'Shvat event at Agudat Achim. When I close my eyes, the sounds, smells, sights and the full sense of community still envelopes me, and it always will. Thank you for all who were able to join us in making it such a memorable event.

How little did we know our World was about to change, to the level we see today, as a result of COVID19.

As I watched the year unfold, it became quite clear that we are resilient and we found other ways to come together, while always keeping in mind safety for all.

Sooooooooo... "Drumroll" please... A totally different way of engaging with each other is now being offered to all.

Tu B'Shvat 2021 might be different!!! But we can still celebrate together as community while being teachers for each other!!!

There is no Jewish celebration that does not involve some level of food and drink, along of course, with study and merriment of some type...

I am starting with offering the "Menu" for the evening of January 27th and the whole day of January 28th, 2021, otherwise known on the Jewish calendar as TU B'SVAT 5780. -- To be created, based on personal taste, by you.

Suggested items to consume on the 15th Day of the month of

Shvat/Tu B'Shvat/ **ט"ו בִּשְׁבַּט** with your household, whether or not you have a Tu B'Shvat Seder/Seder Tu

B'Shvat/ **סֵדֶר ט"ו בִּשְׁבַּט**, to represent The Seven

Species/Shiv'at HaMinim/ **שִׁבְעַת הַמִּינים** we traditionally highlight on this day, and the Almond

Tree/Sh'kediya/ **שְׁקֵדִיָּה**, which announces the coming of Spring in the Land of Israel.

Wheat/Cheeta/ **חֵיטִים/חֵיטִין - חֵיטָה**:

Bread, Crackers, Cookies, Pasta, other mainly Wheat products.

Barley/Se'orah **שְׂעוּרִים - שְׂעוּרָה**:

Bread, Crackers, Cereal, Non-Alcoholic Barley Malt drinks, For responsible adult drinkers: Barley Malt Beer products, other mainly Barley products.

Grape Vine/Gefen/ **גֶּפֶן - גִּפְנִים**:

Fresh Grapes **עֵנָב - עֲנָבִים** of any variety, Dried raisins of any variety, Grape "Fruit Leather", Grape Juice, For responsible adult drinkers: Grape Wine products, other mainly Grape products.

Fig/Te'enah/ **תְּאֵנָה - תְּאֵנִים**:

Fresh, Dried, Fig Newtons, Fig Jam, other mainly Fig products.

Pomegranate/Rimon/ **רִמּוֹן - רִמּוֹנִים**:

Fresh, Dried, Pomegranate Juice, Chocolate covered pomegranate, other mainly Pomegranate products.

"Oil of Olive"/Zeit Shemen/ **זֵית שֶׁמֶן**:

Olives **זֵית - זֵיתִים** of many varieties, Olive Oil Dips, Olive paste spread, Meals prepared/cooked using Olive Oil and/or Olives as a main ingredient, such as Humus Tapenade.

Honey/D'vash/ **דְּבַשׁ**: (one or both of the following two items)

Date/Tamar/ **תְּמָרִים - תְּמָר** - Fresh or Dried, Silan Date syrup, Date Molasses, Date based beverages, Date nut/coconut balls, other mainly Date products. (Traditional choice)

Carob/Charoov/ **חַרוּבִים - חָרוֹב** - Fresh, Dried, Carob chips, Carob Powder drinks, Carob Powder based Chocolate/Cocoa replacement cooked, baked and non-baked goods, Carob coated rice cakes, Carob based, instead of chocolate, candy, other mainly Carob products. (famous choice)

Almond/Shaked/ **שֶׁקָדִים - שֶׁקָד**: Raw/Roasted almonds, almond butter, almond flour baked goods, Almond Milk beverages, Marzipan, chocolate covered almonds, other mostly Almond products. (Coming of Spring announcer)

You can enjoy marking the end of Winter and coming of Spring and Summer by symbolically drinking, in turn, the four choices of suggested

Grape Juice/Mits Anavim/ **מִיץ עֲנָבִים** below, representing the seasons, some with questions for you to contemplate:

- White Grape Juice, representing trees in Winter hibernation, no sap flowing. In the Northeast we usually have white snow on the ground -- Winter season.
- Light Pink Grape Juice, representing trees who start producing sap early. Like Sugar Maples in our area that announce spring is on its way, the Israeli Almond tree blooms -- Late Winter and early Spring season.

- Dark Pink Grape Juice, representing other trees who produce sap and, the early bloomers' first fruits -- Late Spring and Summer season. Which trees bloom early in your neck of the woods?
- Dark Red Grape Juice, representing full sap production in all trees, late Summer blooming trees and Fall fruit producing trees -- Summer into Autumn season. Do you know which fruit trees in our area those are?

Something to ponder and/or explore:

A. Some Jewish communities around the World choose to eat many more types of fruits and grains than the ones already mentioned above, on Tu B'Shvat, thus highlighting the bounty of G-d's Earth, whom we are traditionally commanded to take care of; Can you go online and find out which Jewish communities around the World do so? Which fruits and how many of them do they eat? Do not be surprised if the numbers are big, 15-100 types are not unheard of!

B. Below are examples of categories used in choosing the maximum variety of fruits and grains to share at the Tu B'Shvat table. How many do you recognize, enjoy eating and sharing with others? How many more types of fruits and grains do you know and enjoy having when they are available to you? Which is your favorite?

Fruit with skin that is usually not eaten:

Mandarin oranges
Clementines
Navel Oranges
Grapefruits
Kiwis

Pistachio Nuts
Coconuts
Peanuts
Assorted Nuts

Fruit with seeds/stones that are not usually eaten:

Peaches
Avocados
Apricots
Plums
Cherries
Mangos
Olives

Fruits that can be eaten whole, seeds included, by some people:

Apples
Strawberries
Cranberries
Pears
Berries, all types.

Bread, cookies or crackers, grains and legumes:

Containing wheat

Containing Barley

Gluten Free bread, cookies or crackers similar in style to above two suggestions

Other types of nourishing grains, such as Teff, Quinoa, Amaranth, Buckwheat, Oat, Wild types of Rice, etc.

Legumes: Beans, Lentils, Peas -- of many types.

You may, of course, include as many Vegetables varieties as well.

Drinks and Water:

Dairy milks, such as Cow, Goat, Sheep, etc. To accompany a Dairy or Parve meal.

Plant based beverages/"milk" such as oat, pistachio, soy, coconut, etc. To accompany a Meat or Parve meal.

Assorted 100% fruit juices, such as orange, apple, pineapple, etc.

Hot drinks such as tea, cocoa, carob, coffee, etc. with or without dairy/non-dairy cream, based on meal type.

WATER!!! A Very Important Concept in modern day Tu B'Shvat.

Now that eating and drinking is going to be part of the celebration, it is also time to think about the other concepts of Tu B'Shvat that are important in the current day commemoration and celebration.

I challenge each and every one of our community members, from the youngest to the oldest and each at their own level, or if you prefer each family group, to personally choose and/or ask to be assigned one of the following topics to explore and understand how it relates to the Tu B'Shvat Holiday these days. Also, I encourage you to join us on January 28th, via Zoom, and share with us the wisdom you have gained through conversation, your artwork, poems, and any other way you choose to share.

If for some reason Zoom participation is not possible, I encourage each and every one of you to share what you have learned by sending your thoughts, artwork, poems, etc. to us for sharing with others.

The following ideas, topics and suggestions, in no particular order, are not new! Many of us discussed them together in the past and/or learnt about them. But just like Torah study, we ought

to revisit them regularly. Since it is not always possible for individuals to adequately address these topics alone, we collectively address them as a community.

1. Water in our World, good, bad, available or not?
2. Water conservation/saving/reclaiming.
3. Drought and how it affects our World?
4. Pollution, what types exist in our World?
5. Fire, Good! Is that possible? Why?
6. Fire, Bad! Charity box for first responders.
7. JNF, History of, and how we are still partners with this organization? Name some of JNF's programs.
8. Local Tree and Shrubs programs.
9. Trees, why do we plant them? How do we honor/remember people doing this?
10. Name Jewish traditions for new/young trees.
11. How many ancient forests still exist in our World? Where are they? What can we learn from them?
12. Trees, why are they important in our World?
13. Recycling, explain what this is. How careful are you with doing it?

14. Recycling, what Jewish items can be recycled from holiday to holiday and/or made from recycled items?
15. Tikun Olam, what does this mean? Who can be part of Tikun Olam?
16. What organizations help our World? Please name them and explain what they do and how.
17. Organization in Israel that help the World and Israel.
18. Bal Tashchit/Thou Shall Not Waste! What does this mean?
19. Why do many Jews plant Parsley on Tu B'Shvat?
20. What do you know about the "Seven Species"?
21. Where's the traditional Jewish passage about the Seven Species? Print and read out loud in Hebrew/English.
22. Stories/Legends about the Seven Species.
23. What is a Tu B'Shvat Seder?
24. Gratitude in our World. Can you write a poem or create a piece of art illustrating this?
25. Jewish prayers and blessings related to our topics.
26. Create blessings for our topics.
27. What are your hopes for our World?
28. Can you find music related to Tu B'Shvat? In English, Hebrew, other language.

29. Can you find music related to our topics of Tu B'Shvat? In English, Hebrew, other language.

30. Can you think of a new organization to help the World? Make a charity box for it.

31. Shabbat Shirah is always around Tu B'Shvat. What's the main story in the Torah/Haftarah?

32. Create musical instruments from recycled materials and sing your heart out.

33. Tu B'Shvat is one of four Jewish New Years, what are the other three and when do we celebrate them?

34. Your personal promises to our World at each of the seasons. What are they?

I am so looking forward to your participation as a community of teachers and learners.

Stay healthy, warm and safe.

Kol Tuv/All the Best,

HaMorah Tsipporah A.K.A Ms. Zipporah Harris :)