



Federation for Jewish Philanthropy
OF UPPER FAIRFIELD COUNTY

CONTACT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

What does a 2,000-year-old date taste like?

Hear from scientists who coaxed an ancient Judean date palm to bear fruit

In September, Israeli scientists from the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies and Hadassah Medical Center travelled back in time two millennia, becoming the first people to sample dates from trees extinct since the biblical period.

Dr. Elaine Solowey, director of the Center for Sustainable Agriculture of the Arava Institute, and Dr. Sarah Sallon, director of the Louis L. Borick Natural Medicine Research Center of Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, harvested ancient dates in the culmination of an ambitious, decades-long experiment to raise the biblical-era date palm, *Phoenix dactylifera*, from the dead.

On January 26, Dr. Solowey and David Lehrer, executive director of the Arava Institute, will tell this miraculous story live on Zoom.

The program, open to the community free of charge, is hosted by Federation for Jewish Philanthropy of Upper Fairfield County (Conn.) in partnership with the Arava Institute, the Consulate General of Israel to New England, and more than 30 Jewish federations across North America.

“I’ve been following the story of Dr. Solowey’s work on the Judean date palm for the past decade,” says Federation CEO David Weisberg, who will facilitate the conversation and who has a past professional relationship with the Arava Institute. “Bringing back a tree and its fruit from extinction is truly a real-life *Jurassic Park* story.”

The researchers believe that the dates were native to ancient Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula, and hybridized in the ancient Land of Israel. The Arava-Hadassah experiment seeks to rediscover the origins of the historic date-palm population and confirm the date seeds’ long-term durability, while shedding light on ancient cultivation techniques that nurtured this unique fruit and exploring potential relevance for modern date agronomy.

“The harvest of the biblical date palms brought years of innovative scientific research to fruition,” says Lehrer. “We proved that we can not only restore an ancient variety to the land but showed how scientific collaboration and academic partnership benefits all the people of the Middle East.”

[more]

Photo: Researchers Dr. Elaine Soloway of the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies (left) with Dr. Sarah Sallon of Hadassah Medical Center, moments after picking the first harvest of dates
CREDIT: MARCOS SCHONHOLZ

Program details:

A *Jurassic Park* Agricultural Miracle in Israel

Tuesday, Jan. 26, 12 noon

Open to the community free of charge

Registration: jewishphilanthropyct.org/datepalm

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The Federation for Jewish Philanthropy of Upper Fairfield County gives life to the important Jewish tradition of uniting people of good will to meet humanitarian and educational needs at home, in Israel, and around the world. A member of the non-profit network, The Jewish Federations of North America, Federation represents and engages the Jewish communities of Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Georgetown, Monroe, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Rowayton, Southport, Stratford, Trumbull, Weston, Westport, and Wilton. jewishphilanthropyct.org

With a student body comprised of Jordanians, Palestinians, Israelis, and participants from around the world, the **Arava Institute for Environmental Studies** is a leading environmental-studies and research institute in the Middle East. The Arava Institute houses accredited academic programs, research centers, and international-cooperation initiatives focusing on a range of environmental concerns and challenges, with the mission of providing the Middle East with a new generation of sophisticated professionals who will meet the region's environmental challenges with richer and more innovative peace-building solutions. arava.org