

Tu B'Shevat

Family Picnic

New Orleans Jan. 20, 2013



TU B'SHVAT
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SUNDAY, JANUARY 20,
NOON - 2:00 PM, Uptown JCC

Celebrate Tu B'shvat, the "New Year for Trees," with an afternoon picnic. Bring the whole family to plant seeds, listen to stories, create bags using recycled materials, and assemble "grassheads" to take home. A light lunch will be served.

RSVP by Wednesday, January 16 to
Moshiko@nojcc.org or 504.897.0143.

 

A picnic for young families was co-sponsored by PJ Library and the JCC. Scheduled for a Sunday afternoon, it began with outdoor* pizza lunch (including plenty of Tu B'Shevat fruits!), continued with a Tu B'Shevat story and songs, and concluded with a selection of six outdoor* activity stations. The goal was to educate young children (and their parents) about the themes of Tu B'Shevat while enjoying an array of engaging family activities.

*Of course, most of the country would have to hold this event indoors.

This was the first Tu B'Shevat event sponsored by PJ Library or the JCC. Publicized through the JCC nursery school as well as PJ Library's postal and email list, it attracted an ideal number of people (about 36) to accommodate the various activities within a two-hour time frame.

Picnic lunch was kid-friendly cheese pizza, along with lots of healthy fruits and vegetables. Many families came directly from religious school. As most of them finished, we gathered together on a huge blanket to hear a quintessential (actually non-PJ Library) **Tu B'Shevat story*** about the Talmudic character Honi HaMe'agel, who inspired the verse "as my ancestors planted for me, so I shall plant for those who come after me"). This was followed by some lively **Tu B'Shevat singing** before the group divided up to visit the various stations:

- 1) **Planting parsley for Passover:** This is a simple, fool-proof project that young children can do with supervision and that families can take home and nurture until Pesach.
- 2) **Fruit faces:** Using various (pre-cut) shapes and configurations of fruits, the families created fruit faces out of grapefruits, Mr. Potato-Head-style. Tasty, colorful and creative!
- 3) **Story corner:** With a rocking chair and a big, inviting blanket, we displayed all of the PJL Tu B'Shevat books, plus many other favorites for the occasion (The Giving Tree, The Lorax, The Littlest Tree, etc.).
- 4) **TU B'SHEVAT GAMES:** We used a number of home-made games including a Tu Shevat chutes and ladders game, a picture card matching game, and a simple jeopardy-style board game that also incorporated the Seven Species. I am happy to provide templates and materials for these games upon request.

- 5) **Puzzles, coloring and activity sheets:** LOTS of Tu B'Shevat word searches, connect-the-dots, hidden pictures, etc. for engaging every PJ age level.
- 6) **Recycled bags** (purses, book bags) made from t-shirts. Attractive and easy to make in all shapes and sizes. Participants can bring a favorite outgrown t-shirt.

Among the station activities that we considered but did not include because of space / time limitations: Edible tree art (using bread slices spread with green-colored cream cheese, pretzel sticks and raisins) and "Mr. Grassheads" (using nylon stockings and grass seeds).

To enhance the educational component of the program, we placed posters around the area, displaying Jewish verses which recall the sacred value of trees and the environmental protection themes of Tu B'Shevat. We also provided take-home sheets which included a Tu B'Shevat info sheet (attached) and a checklist of eco-friendly practices for families and kids.

Contact: Bonnie Lustig, PJ Library Coordinator, New Orleans
Jewish Children's Regional Service bonnie@jcrs.org, 800-729-527

*I figure it is only a matter of time before some version of this Honi story will become a PJ Library book





TU B'SHEVAT

ט"ו בִּשְׁבַט

15TH DAY OF THE MONTH OF SHEVAT
 ט = 9 ו = 6 ט"ו = 15

THE NEW YEAR FOR TREES!

THE WIZARDS TU B'SHEVAT SEDER

On Tu B'Shevot we drink 4 cups of wine, each cup a different colored wine to represent the changes in our 4 seasons.



God's greatest gift to the Jewish people is the Torah, which is compared to the Tree of Life.

There are many forms of life that are dependent upon trees. The tree is the symbol for FAMILY such as our own. The roots symbolize our traditions and the branches are our children.

The Seder: Various colors of juice remind us of the 4 seasons: WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER AND FALL; Our 4 seasons intertwined with the 4 elements of Nature: EARTH, WATER, AIR AND FIRE.



The 1ST fruit has a peel or shell that can be eaten. It represents EARTH. This fruit reminds us of the protection that the earth provides.



The 2ND fruit has a tough inner core and soft outer part. It represents WATER. It reminds us the great power of our inner selves. Our hearts and minds are strong even when our outer cores are not.



The 3RD fruit is completely edible. This symbolizes the element of AIR, because it has no barriers.



The 4TH fruit is actually not a fruit but its seeds. This symbolizes the element of FIRE which can be created by a particle as small as a seed. Seeds symbolize life. Our lives are filled with hopes, dreams and promises.

BLESSING OVER THE FRUIT

ברוך אתה, ה' אלהינו, מלך העולם, בורא פרי העץ.
 Blessed are you, Adonai, Ruler of the world, who creates the fruit of the tree.



DID YOU KNOW?

The almond blossom is the most visible sign of the arrival of Tu B'Shevot in Israel. With the arrival of Tu B'Shevot, the pink-white flowers of the almond trees can be seen all around Israel's hillsides.

In Israel, many people celebrate Tu B'Shevot by planting trees. Outside of Israel, we collect money for planting trees in Israel.

JNF is the Jewish National Fund where you can purchase a tree to honor a friend or a loved one.

7 The Torah describes Israel as a land blessed with seven fruits and grains: "A land of wheat and barley, and (grape) vine, and fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of olive-trees and (date) honey." (Deuteronomy 8:8)

TREE OF LIFE PRAYER

Tree of Life Prayer text from: Proverbs 3:18,17 Lamentations 5:21

עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה, ותמכיה מאשר.
 דרכיה דרכי נעים, וכל נתיבותיה שלום.
 השיבנו יי אלקה ונשובה, חדש ימינו כקדם.

It is a Tree of Life to those who hold it fast, and all who cling to it find happiness. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace. Help us to return to You, O God, then truly shall we return. Renew our days as in the past.

WISE WIZARD SAYS:

Tu B'Shevot reminds us that we should celebrate and appreciate Trees and that we are responsible for the world around us. The Torah teaches us to not only care for our neighbors but to care for nature, too.



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SEASON



NATURE

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BLESSING OVER THE FRUIT

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מְלִךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

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עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא לַמְחַזְקִים בָּהּ, וְתִמְכֶּיָה מֵאֲשֶׁר.
דַּרְכֶּיָה דְרָכֵי נֹעַם, וְכָל נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם.
הִשִּׁיבֵנו יי אֱלֹהֵי וְנִשׁוּבָה, חֲדָשׁ יְמֵינוּ בְּקֶדֶם.

It is a Tree of Life to those who hold it fast, and all who cling to it find happiness. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace. Help us to return to You, O God, then truly shall we return. Renew our days as in the past.

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