



THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER





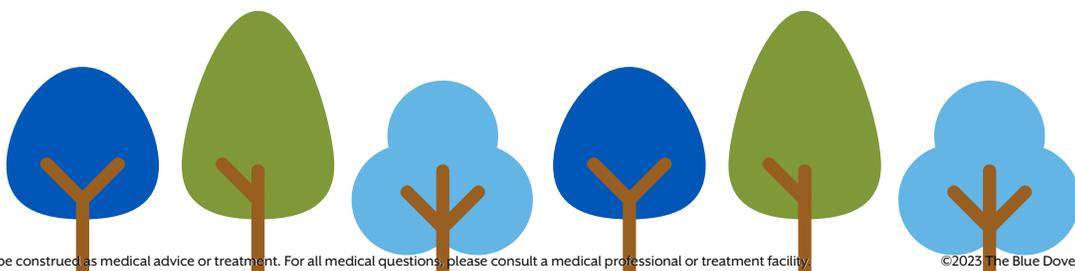
GRATITUDE AS SELF-CARE ON TU B'SHVAT

Tu B'Shvat, also called the “new year for the trees,” is a Jewish holiday focused on nature and humankind’s stewardship of Earth. Today, it’s an ecological holiday on which people also plant trees, often in memory of a loved one.

In the 16th century, the Kabbalists of Tzfat created a Tu B'Shvat seder, which endures even today as one of the many ways Jews celebrate the holiday. A traditional Tu B'Shvat seder has special and symbolic items as part of the ritual — namely, seven specific species native to the Land of Israel. The seder does not have a specific Jewish observance, so it’s a wonderful opportunity to have fun with your celebration and to be creative. This seder is based on the writings of Yitzhak Buxbaum, author of "A Person is Like a Tree: A SourceBook for Tu B'Shvat."

Tu B'Shvat can help us gain insight into living and personal growth. It also offers the perfect time to practice gratitude and appreciate what we so often take for granted. Like all living things, we are constantly growing and bettering ourselves. Just as we care for the trees, we also must care for ourselves. Just as we water a garden, we must nourish ourselves. When used as part of our own self-care, gratitude can play a large role in healing, both physically and mentally.

Expressing gratitude has been shown to improve our mood, increase our connection to others and benefit our health. When gratitude is a regular part of daily life, people experience lower rates of stress and depression. Many have reported feeling more loved and more connected to others and said they are more likely to take care of their physical health. All this leads to higher energy levels, better sleep and a stronger immune system to fight off illness or infection.



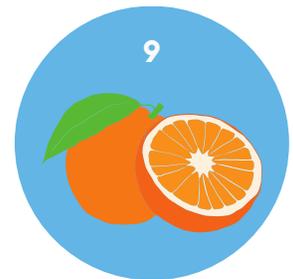
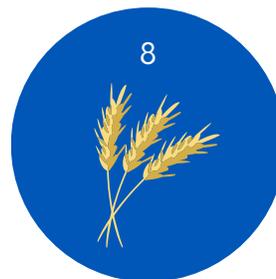
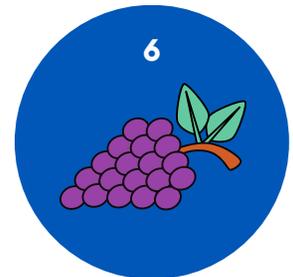
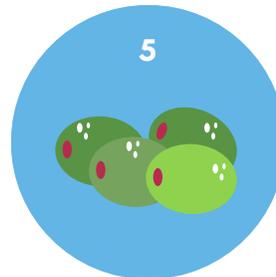
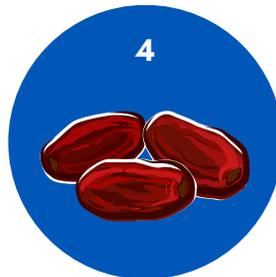
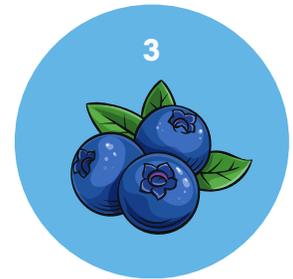
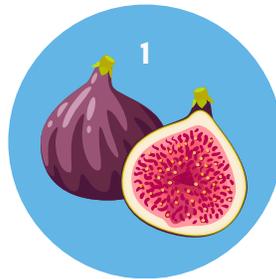


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For the Following Activity You will Need

- Food to represent the seven species found in Israel or substitutions to match your food needs and restrictions:

1. Figs
2. Shelled nuts
3. Fruits with edible seeds
4. Dates
5. Olives
6. Grapes
7. Fruits with an inedible pit
8. Wheat and barley products
9. Fruits with peels



- White and red wine or grape juice
- Plates/cups
- Something to write with
- The Blue Dove Foundation Mental Health Tu B'shvat Seder Worksheet for each participant.
- At least two people (Please note that while participants are numbered, there is no need to have a big group. This is just so the leader can ask someone to read the different participant roles.)



THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER WORKSHEET

Tzedakah

Name someone who may be struggling with feelings of loneliness and one way to safely reach out to them: _____

Name a social cause you care about and one way to look into being more involved:

Name one thing you can do to brighten the day of someone this week: _____

Eating Grains/Kavanah

What do you hope to get out of this seder? _____

What is one thing you want to reflect on during this seder? _____

Eating Fruit/Shehecheyanu/Mindful Eating

Name one thing you haven't done YET this season that brings you joy: _____

Mindful Eating Questions

What does it feel like to hold or chew this food? _____

How does it smell? _____

What does this food remind you of? _____

What memory do you associate with this food? _____

How did this food come to be at your table? _____

Drinking Grape Juice/Personal Growth

Name one thing you have learned/accomplished: _____

Name one strength you have that helped you: _____

Name one person who helped you get through this year: _____

Name one thing you want to work on: _____

Name one resource you have to help yourself: _____

How would you like your life to look this next year? _____

What changes would you like to create for your daily life? _____



THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER

Introduction

Leader

On Tu B'Shvat, we celebrate trees, Earth and our role as caretakers.

During this seder, we will think about, and eat, the seven species for which the Land of Israel is praised in Deuteronomy 8:8, which says: Israel is "a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey."



The seven species and their Hebrew translations are:

Wheat - chitah

Barley - se'orah

Grapes - gefen

Figs - te'edah

Pomegranates - rimon

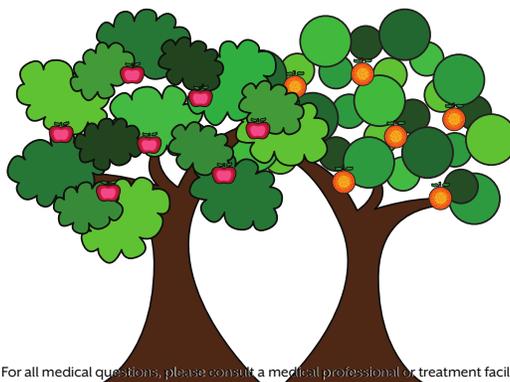
Olives - zayit

Dates - tamar or d'vash

Why do we celebrate the new year for fruit trees on Tu B'Shvat?

All Say

When the Holy Temple was destroyed, the Jewish people no longer could bring the first fruits (bikkurim) to Jerusalem, so on Tu B'Shvat, we offer the "fruit of our lips" — our gratitude and praise — instead for all the fruit trees in the world.





THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER

Participant

“When a person is privileged to have food, he should show his appreciation by giving charity to the poor and feeding them, just as God feeds him.”
(Zohar - Parshat Trumah)

Tu B’Shvat may seem oddly timed here, but it marks the beginning of spring — the season of growth in Israel. In the days of the Temple, we took “tithes” (a tenth) from fruits and other crops to give to the poor.



Leader

There is a Jewish tradition of tzedakah, giving charity, in which we give a tenth of our harvest to those in need. Tzedakah translates to “righteousness.” Let’s all take a moment to ask ourselves:

- Where have I been fortunate this year?
- Who may still be struggling?
- What can I do to help?

There are so many ways to give back to your community. This doesn’t only mean with monetary tzedakah. **Many are struggling with feelings of loneliness and social isolation.** Are there people you can reach out to (in safe ways) to be a social connection? Are there volunteer opportunities that may help others? Are there little things you can do to brighten the lives of others?





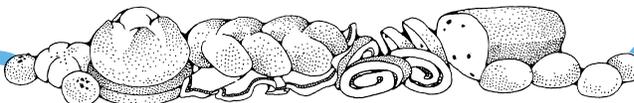
THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER

On the worksheet on page 3, answer the following:



1. Name someone who may be struggling with feelings of loneliness and one way to safely reach out to them.
2. Name a social cause you care about and one way to look into being more involved.
3. Name one thing you can do to brighten the day of someone this week.

Eating Grains



Wheat and barley are the first two of the seven species connected to the Land of Israel.

Leader

We will begin by eating bread or cookies or cake. First, let's reflect on our lives at this moment. Do we feel like we are in a period of winter (darkness) or spring (growth)? What has brought us to this table today? Take a moment to set a kavanah, or intention, as these are the first two of seven things we will eat today.

On the worksheet on page 3, answer the following:



- What do you hope to get out of this seder?
- What is one thing you want to reflect on during this seder?

A blessing is a thank-you note.

The more we appreciate our gifts, the more sincere is our thanks, and the more sublime is our pleasure.

Who is wealthy? One who is happy with what they have. (Pirkei Avot 4:1)



THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER



If eating cake, you may recite the following blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מְזוֹנוֹת

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates species of nourishment.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, borai minei mezonot.



If eating bread, it is tradition to wash your hands before eating, pouring water from a cup on each hand twice, and then to say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has sanctified us through Your commandments and has commanded us concerning the washing of hands.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu al n'tilat yadayim.



Without speaking from the time of the washing, we then recite the blessing over the bread. If you would like, you may use this moment of silence to contemplate what it means to have food on the table, to express silent gratitude or simply to reflect on your kavanah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haolam, hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.

Eat your bread, savoring every bite.





THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER

Eating Fruit



Leader

On Tu B'Shvat, we eat the fruit for which the Land of Israel is praised in Deuteronomy. Every seder is different and has a different variety of fruits, so if you have a preference, eat the fruits in the order you most enjoy.



You may say the following blessing and then eat one of the fruits:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, borai pri ha'etz.

If there is a seasonal fruit at the table you haven't yet had this season, you may add the Shehecheyanu blessing. The Shehecheyanu is traditionally recited the first time we do something in a season, or a year, as a message of gratitude for making it to this point in our lives.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהַחַיְנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעַנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us and brought us to this season.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh.





THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER

Leader

Now take a moment and think of something else you love that you haven't yet had this season. It doesn't have to be a food. It could be someone you haven't spoken with, a hobby or a book you haven't picked up in a while.

On the worksheet on page 3, answer the following:

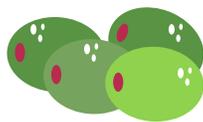


- Name one thing you haven't done YET this season that brings you joy:

Take each fruit one by one. Enjoy the many unique flavors and textures. Try to be mindful in your eating by thinking about the following:

- What does it feel like to hold or chew this food?
- How does this food smell?
- What does this food remind you of?
- What memory do you associate with this food?
- How did this food come to be at your table?

Participant



Why do we eat olives?

Rabbi Yehoshuah Ben Levi said: **Why is Israel compared to an olive tree? Because just as the leaves of an olive tree do not fall off either in summer or winter, so too the Jewish people shall not be cast off...** (Talmud - Menachot 53b) We all go through periods of darkness and periods of light; taking care of our mental health helps us wade through the winters.

The sages taught: **"Just as olive oil brings light into the world, so do the people of Israel bring light into the world."** (Midrash — Shir HaShirim Raba 1:2) We all have the power to make the world brighter and more whole.

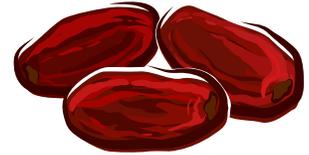




THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER

Participant

Why dates? It is said:



The righteous bloom like a date-palm. (Tehillim 92:13)

Your Stature is like the [date] palm. (Song of Songs 7:8)

Just as the palm tree doesn't bend or sway, so too are the Jewish people; we are resilient.

Moreover, no part of the palm tree is wasted. According to Midrash (Bamidbar Raba 3:1), the dates are for eating; the lulav branches are for waving in praise on Sukkot; the dried thatch is for roofing; the fibers are for ropes; and the trunk is for house beams. Every single person in our community is needed. Inclusion is not about making space for those who are different; it is about recognizing the value and worth of each of us.

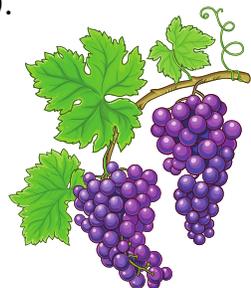
Drinking Wine or Grape Juice



Leader

At the Tu B'Shvat seder, it is traditional to drink four cups of wine or grape juice, similar to the Passover Seder. Each cup represents something different. We will drink them in this order:

First cup – white wine | second cup – pale pink (white with a drop of red) | third cup – darker pink (with more red added) | fourth cup – almost totally red (with only a drop of white).

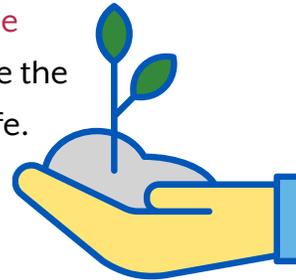




THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER



White grape juice/wine represents potential. It is the buds and sprouts before trees and flowers have blossomed. **Red grape juice /wine represents nature in full bloom. It is the fruits of labor and beauty.** On this day, we begin to leave the winter behind and move into a period of renewal and life.



Participant

Being a farmer requires trust. When a farmer plants a seed, they must have faith it will survive the winter — just as we all must trust we will survive darker days, and spring and joy will return. On Tu B'Shvat, we begin to see our trust rewarded. When we plant a seed for our own personal growth, it requires work, trust and patience.

Leader

Take a moment to think about one thing you have learned or accomplished this year. It doesn't need to be a huge achievement. We are all on our own personal journeys, and some of us might still be at a lower point. Recognizing this and having hope for the future is an achievement in and of itself.



On the worksheet on page 3, answer the following:

- Name one thing you have learned/accomplished.
- Name one strength you have that helped you.
- Name one person who helped you get through this year.



Pour a cup of white grape juice/wine, and say the following blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech haolam, borai pri hagafen.

As you drink, take the time to be mindful. Sip slowly and really enjoy the taste of the wine. Now add a single drop of red grape juice/wine to your cup, and watch as the color changes.



THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER

Participant

As the wine begins to get darker, we can start to see potential turn into reality; it is a seed with the potential to grow.

On the worksheet on page 3, name one skill you want to work on.



Enjoy another sip before adding more drops of red to your cup. Think about an area of life you would like to improve. Picture your ideal self.



On the worksheet on page 3, name one resource you have to help.



Leader

Fill the rest of your cup with red grape juice/wine. As you drink this cup, think about this quote:



“And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit each person under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid, for the mouth of God has spoken.” (Micah 4:3-4)



THE MENTAL HEALTH TU B'SHVAT SEDER

On the worksheet on page 3, answer the following:



- How would you like your life to look this next year?
- What changes would you like to create for your daily life?

Enjoy another sip before adding more drops. Now that we have washed our hands and eaten bread, we can choose to recite the Birkat Hamazon or Grace After Meals. Or you may simply take a moment to think about which food you enjoyed most and how being in this space today affected you.

Leader 

As we come to the end of the seder, let's all use this moment to take a breath, ground ourselves and reflect on the time we have shared and the kavanah (intention) we each set at the beginning. We have only scratched the surface of the true meaning of the holiday. That is the beauty of the Jewish calendar; each year we celebrate the same holidays, yet each year we grow just like the trees.

All say 

Next year in Jerusalem!
L'shana haba'a b'Yerushalayim!

