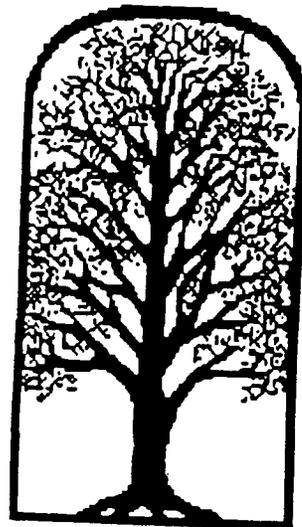


Tu B'Shvat

Congregation Kahal B'raira



Adult Reading: From the Song of Songs (*Shir HaShirim*)

Rise up my love, my fair one,
and come away,
for lo, the winter has passed
and the rain is gone.
The flowers appear on Earth,
the time of singing is come
and the voice of the turtledove is heard.
The fig tree brings forth her green figs
and the vines in blossom bring forth their fragrance.

Adult: Introduction

Today is Tu B'Shvat. It is a New Year's Day. Not the regular New Year's Day that everybody celebrates on January 1. Not Chinese New Year. Not even Rosh Hashonah, the birthday of the world, the day on which we remind ourselves to treat people with respect and love in the coming year. Today, Tu B'Shvat, is the birthday of the trees. On this day, we examine our place within nature's cycle. And, because we humans are a part of nature, we reflect on our interconnectedness with all humanity. As humanists, we ponder our power to change the way things are. Finally, we remind ourselves to treat all of nature with respect and love in the coming year. We remind ourselves, and we teach our children.

(The following quotation is from *Home*, a movie written by Ted Perry)

Children:

Teach your children
what we have taught our children
that the Earth is our mother.
Whatever befalls the Earth
befalls the sons and daughters of the Earth.

This we know.
The Earth does not belong to us,
we belong to the Earth.

This we know.
All things are connected
like the blood which unites one family.
All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the Earth
befalls the sons and daughters of the Earth.
We did not weave the web of life;
We are merely a strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

Adult: What is Tu B'Shvat?

These words capture many of the elements of Tu B'Shvat. Whatever happens to the Earth, good or bad, eventually happens to us. Trees are a part of nature's web, and we are singularly dependent on them.

Trees turn air and sunlight into our food, into our houses, and into the houses of nearly all other living things. We must protect trees today - for they will sustain the lives of our children tomorrow. So that we do not forget, Jews set aside this day, the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shvat, to think about our relationship with the rest of nature, and in particular, our very special relationship with trees and plants.

THE FOUR CUPS OF WINE

The celebration of Tu B'Shvat is often conducted in the form of a Seder. We drink four cups of wine or grape juice that remind us of the changing of the seasons and the natural cycle of birth, growth, death, and rebirth. Let us begin with blessing the wine:

Congregation: *B'rukhim ha-shemesh, ha-geshem v'ha-aretz.*

All Children in the Congregation: Blessed are the sun, the rain, and the earth.

Congregation: *B'rukhim ha-borim pri hagafen.*

All Children in the Congregation: Blessed are those who bring forth the fruit of the vine.

The First Cup: Cup of Memory

Adult: The first cup is *pure* white juice, symbolizing winter. As we fill our cups we remember the beauty of winter...the quietness of a snowfall, the infinite variety of snowflakes, our joy in playing winter games, the warmth of home and family. We remember that our juice began as a grape, many seasons ago on a vine, and that sun, rain, earth, and sky produced it. We are grateful for all the people who tended the vine, crushed the grape, and created the juice. We remember our ancestors and relatives who lifted their cups in celebration, as we drink this cup.

The Second Cup: Cup of Hope

Adult: The second cup is white with a splash of red. This is the cup of hope. We know even in the coldest days of winter that spring will come, and with it the rebirth of the earth. This is a time of hopeful anticipation. Even in the darkest of times, our people never lose hope; even in the midst of a wasteland of our own creation, we never lose hope of nursing it back to an Eden.

The Third Cup: Cup of Diversity

Adult: With the third cup of juice, the cup of diversity, we celebrate the millions of kinds of living things with whom we share the Earth. We celebrate the varied ways of nature and life's web. We also celebrate the fact that the world is filled with people of many colors and religions, full of endless stories and rich cultural traditions.

The Fourth Cup: Cup of Strength

Adult: The fourth cup, full red, is a symbol of strength. This seder should remind us that we have the strength and the power in ourselves to care for the Earth and our fellow human beings. As we drink this final cup, we dedicate ourselves to use our strength for good and not for evil, for blessings and not for curses, for life and not for destruction.

SONG: Lo Yisa Goy (...And Every Man)

And everyone 'neath his vine and fig tree
Shall live at peace and unafraid.
And everyone 'neath her vine and fig tree
Shall live at peace and unafraid.
And into plowshares beat their swords
Nations shall learn war no more.
And into plowshares beat their swords
Nations shall learn war no more.

Lo yi-sa goy el goy che-rev; lo yil-m'du od mil-cha-ma
Lo yi-sa goy el goy che-rev; lo yil-m'du od mil-cha-ma
Lo yi-sa goy el goy che-rev; lo yil-m'du od mil-cha-ma
Lo yi-sa goy el goy che-rev; lo yil-m'du od mil-cha-ma

And everyone 'neath his vine and fig tree
Shall live at peace and unafraid.
And everyone 'neath her vine and fig tree
Shall live at peace and unafraid.
And into plowshares beat their swords
Nations shall learn war no more.
And into plowshares beat their swords
Nations shall learn war no more.

Child: There is a *Kenyan proverb*: "The Earth was not given to you by your parents. It was loaned to you by your children."

Children: The Seven Deadly Environmental Deeds

There are many ways in which we humans forget that we are part of the living web of nature. By becoming aware of this thoughtlessness, we can learn what we must change in our own lives so that trees and other living things can thrive. Here are some things that we humans do that are harmful to the living web that sustains us:

1. We put ourselves above our community.
2. We foul our own nest.
3. We steal from our children's heritage.
4. We destroy other life forms.
5. We idolize technology.
6. We value our belongings more than who we are.
7. We do not distinguish between what we want and what we need.



THE THREE KINDS OF FRUIT

Adult: On Tu B'Shvat, we eat three types of fruit that teach us something about the world, about nature, and about ourselves. To help us savor the meaning of these fruits, let us first bless and eat them together:

Congregation: *B'rukhim ha-shemesh, h-geshem v'ha-aretz.*

All Children in the Congregation: Blessed are the sun, the rain, and the sky.

Congregation: *B'rukhim ha-borim pri ha-aetz.*

All Children in the Congregation: Blessed are those who bring forth the fruit of the tree.

Adult: The first kind is fruit with a hard outer shell that cannot be eaten. The shell protects the fruit inside, just as a child is protected by his or her parents. These fruits are like the human spirit -- within each of us there is light, hope, and strength- although sometimes they are hidden beneath a shell.

Adult: The date is another kind of fruit- edible on the outside, but hiding the seed of a new tree within each one. A Jewish legend says that the date palm is filled with blessing, for every part of it can be used, every part of it is needed. We eat the dates, its branches bless the Sukka, its fronds are used for thatching, its fibers for ropes, its webbing for sieves, its strong trunk for building.

Adult: The third kind of fruit is the one that is entirely edible, like a fig. This fruit is about the future and symbolizes the peace and security that we all desire. Many of us will not live to eat the fruits of the trees we plant today. Yet, we still plant the trees to help create a better world tomorrow. We eat this fruit to honor the future and to appreciate each part of the many vibrant growing things in our world.

Adult: In every service we take a moment to remember those people who are no longer living but whose good deeds and ideas still enrich our lives. Today, on Tu B'Shvat, we take a moment to remember the creatures loved by our ancestors, but lost when our own parents and grandparents stumbled, or forgot, or did not know.

Reader (LES KAUFMAN, from a book chapter by him):

"The key to the preservation of biological diversity everywhere on Earth - in a rain forest, a coral reef, an estuary, a prairie, a city- is that people must stop thinking of all other life as the green blur out the window of a speeding train. When we stop and look at the oak trees, some important lessons are learned. There will be hope for other species when we come to regard these communities and all their inhabitants as part of our lives, along with the athletes and soap opera stars. In the modern world, no life form is too unimportant to escape our notice. The conservationists will have done their job well when no life form is too unimportant to escape our concern."

REMEMBRANCE

Congregation: Let us be vigilant and lose no more. Let us restore life, and not diminish it. Let us pass a world to our children better and richer than we found it.

Reader #1:

The American chestnut, blighted from our forests by a blight we brought from Europe
The Atlantic grey whale, flensed from the sea by Basque and American whalers in the
1600s

The woodland caribou, now but a phantom in our forests
The sea mink, a creature similar to the sea otter, who once foraged on our New England
shores but has been extinct for one hundred years

Reader #2:

The heath hen, who freely roamed on the meadows of Martha's Vineyard and was known
for its booming call - and its delicious meat

The passenger pigeon, which once darkened our skies with its numbers and was
destroyed by our hunger for its feathers, its flesh, and the forests that nurtured its
multitudes

The great auk, the diving sea bird that made cities on the sea-rocks
The wolf and the mountain lion, driven away by our intolerance of predators other than
ourselves

Congregation:

Let us give hope to the creatures whose lives are now slipping through our hands, and
from our world.

May we have the forethought and strength to save them from ourselves.

Reader:

The American elm, fighting against a disease we imported from Europe
The Atlantic salmon, struggling against dams and farm-raised competitors
The overfished New England cod

The piping plover that nests on our beaches
The right whale, whose numbers decrease steadily
Our inland ponds and rivers, weakened by centuries of industry and agriculture
Gorgeous coastal plain ponds filled with dragonflies and carnivorous plants, endangered
by overdevelopment

Congregation:

We shall protect living things in peril
We shall protect all creatures undiscovered
We shall protect them from ourselves

Reader: Our lives intertwine with others. At this moment, we have a special chance to maintain our quality of life and the beauty and functionality of the things around us. Let us take care of our forests, our waters, our whales, the Cape, the mountains, everything that makes us proud of New England. Let us pass to our children a world better and richer than we found it.

PROMISES ABOUT THE FUTURE

Men:

And they shall build up the wasted areas,
They shall raise up the former desolations,

Women:

They shall repair the wasted cities,
The ruins of many generations.

Men:

May we stand together as stewards of our only home.

Women:

Through our actions may we be truly deserving of this rich and extraordinary world.

Men:

May that time come soon when all humanity will recognize that we are one family,
sharing one planet and one fate.

Women:

May our words and promises become deeds, bringing fulfillment and hope to all.

Everyone:

Blessed be the Earth and all that live upon it. Shalom.

SONG: Tu B'Shvat, Vas Is Dat?

(sung to the tune of "Inch by Inch, Row by Row")

Tu B'shvat, vas is dat?
Is it different from Shabbat?
I hardly know where we should start,
But I think we'll start with trees.

Plant some trees for Tu B'shvat
In the yard or empty lot.
Leave it better than you got,
So we'll all preserve the land.

Planting trees in the snow,
Do they really take root or will grow?
No need for a plow, a rake and a hoe,
But in Israel they could grow.



Tu B'shvat, vas is dat?
We were told that we thought
Leave Earth better than you got
And it all begins with a

*****END*****

NOTE: This service is a melding of Rabbi Stacie Fine's Tu B'Shvat Seder (SHJ 1998), with KB's traditional Tu B'Shvat celebration, written by members of the KB Tu B'Shvat Committee. Thanks to Shari Gelber, the Society for Humanistic Judaism, and the TBSC's members for their help in assembling this service.

