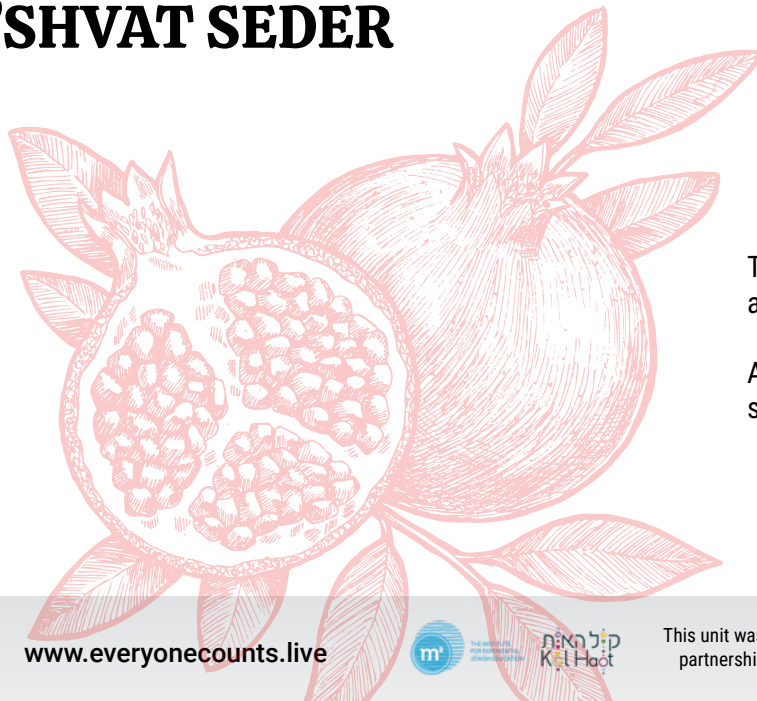




HAGGADAH

for the
BRING HOME
THE HOSTAGES
TU B'SHVAT SEDER



The table is set with the fruits of Israel and the Seven Species

The leader begins:

Long ago when we were exiled by the evil Babylonian regime led by Nevudchnezzar, many of our brethren were taken captive to Babylon. They describe their misery in this verse:

עַל נְהָרוֹת בָּבֶל שָׁם יִשְׁבְּנוּ גַם־בְּכִינוּ בְּזָכְרֵנוּ אֶת־צִיּוֹן:
עַל עֲרָבִים בְּתוֹכָהּ תָּלִינוּ כְּנְרוֹתֵינוּ:
כִּי שָׁם שְׁאַלְנוּנוּ שׁוֹבֵינוּ דְּבַר־י שִׁיר וְתוֹלְלֵינוּ שְׂמֵחָה שִׁירוּ לָנוּ מִשִׁיר צִיּוֹן:
אֵיךְ נִשְׁיר אֶת־שִׁיר ה' עַל אֲדָמַת נֶכֶר:

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, sat and wept,
as we thought of Zion.

There on the poplars we hung up our lyres,
for our captors asked us there for songs; our tormentors,
for amusement:

“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”

How can we sing a song of the Lord on alien soil?”

Psalms 137:1-4

Today, now as then, many of our brethren have been taken captive. They too are being humiliated by their captors, but they cannot sing on foreign soil.

As we begin our Tu B'shvat Seder we will center our experience on the seven species that are integral to the land of Israel.



Leader fills cup with red wine and recites the following:

This red wine symbolizes the blood and pain of those that have been captured and held hostage, as the verse says:

אַל־תִּרְא יַיִן כִּי יִתְאָדָם כִּי־יִתֵּן בַּכּוֹס עֵינֹו יִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּמִישְׁרִים:

“Do not stare at the wine, as it is blood-like.”

Proverbs 23:31

Let’s recite the blessing over the wine:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן

Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha’Olam borei pri hagafen. Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

After the blessing, everyone partakes in the red wine or grape juice.



Each participant takes a wheat cracker/cookie in their hand and recites:

It is written in Bereshit, the book of Genesis:

וַיֵּצֵו ה' אֱלֹהִים עַל הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל עֵץ הַגֶּן אָכַל תֹּאכֵל:

“And God commanded the Adam saying, “Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat;

וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרַע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בַיּוֹם אָכַלְתָּ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת:

but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die.”

Genesis 2:16-17

What is this mysterious fruit of knowledge? The Midrash explains that this tree was actually a stalk of wheat, as wheat is the food of knowledge.

As we eat our wheat today let us remember the captives that are trapped and held against their will, unable to use their knowledge and even think freely as they sit starving in their underground cage. Yet, it also reminds us to use our knowledge and skill to do whatever we can to help free our hostages from the hands of their captors.



Let's recite the blessing for food that is made of grains (but is not bread):

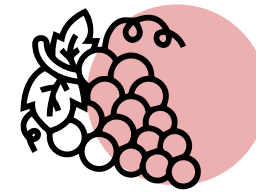
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיְנֵי מְזוֹנוֹת

Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei minei mezonot. Blessed are you L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who creates various kinds of sustenance.

Each participant takes a barley cracker

In Judaism, barley is considered the food of debased people, those who have chosen to act like animals instead of people. It was therefore chosen as the food for the Sotah, the woman suspected of adultery even after countless warnings.

This food reminds us of those depraved murderers who sunk to the lowest levels possible when they abducted elderly men, women, and children, as well as young party-goers who were in the midst of celebrating. Sadly, as many of our hostages are held underground in terror tunnels, they are mistreated and not even afforded the most basic of human dignities. As we eat this simple food of barley, we remember and feel the pain that they are feeling as well.



Each participant takes grapes

It is grapes that ultimately help bring happiness in the world as the verse tells us:

וַיֵּין יְשִׁמַח לֵבָב אָנוֹשׁ לְהַצְהִיל פְּנִים מִשְׁמֶן וְלֶחֶם לֵבָב אָנוֹשׁ יִסְעֵד

“Wine that cheers the hearts of men, oil that makes the face shine, and bread that sustains man’s life.”

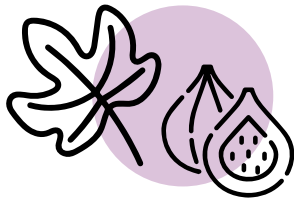
Psalms 104:15

Let's recite the blessing for fruit:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri ha-aitz. Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

As our hostages continue to languish in captivity, their suffering, their families' suffering, and really the suffering of the entire Jewish people is something that we are all feeling at the moment. As we eat our grapes, let us all offer our prayers for happiness and joy for so many that need our prayer.



Each participant takes a fig

The prophet Micha describes the period of ultimate redemption, as a time when

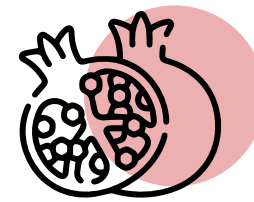
וְיָשְׁבוּ אִישׁ תַּחַת גִּפְנוֹ וְתַחַת תְּאֲנָתוֹ וְאֵין מַחְרִיד כִּי־פִי ה' צָבָאוֹת דְּבַר:

“Every family shall sit under its own vine and fig tree with no one to disturb them. For it was G-d who spoke.”

Micha 4:4

The fig tree is the ultimate symbol of peace and tranquility. Our hostages need our prayers and our thoughts that one day they too can experience this peaceful stage.

As we eat our figs, let us reflect on what more we can do to help them return to their homes and their fig trees.



Each participant takes pomegranate seeds

Jews are compared to a pomegranate. The Zohar describes the Jewish people as :

כֵּלֶם מְלֵאִים מִצְוֹת כְּרִמּוֹן

“Completely filled with good deeds and actions like the pomegranate”

The pomegranate represents the overflowing potential goodness inside each of us. We all have the opportunity to act on that potential at any time that we please, except of course for those that are held against their will. The inability to have the freedom to do good in the world is painful and difficult, as we eat our pomegranates let us reflect on the goodness that we are privileged to be able to accomplish and perhaps even help those that most need our help.



Each participant takes an olive

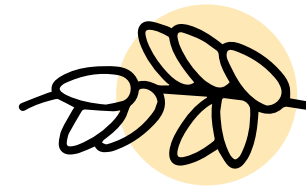
Evil has been perpetrated on this earth for many years. In the aftermath of the first evil generation, G-d brought a flood to the world to cleanse the world. As the water did its job and the world was reborn, Noah sent a dove out to know when the waters had receded and the land was once again ready to be inhabited. The verse describes what the dove brought back:

וַתָּבֵא אֵלָיו הַיּוֹנָה לְעֵת עֶרֶב וְהָיָה עָלֶיהָ זֵית טֶרֶף בְּפִיהָ וַיָּדַע נֹחַ כִּי־קָלוּ
הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ:

“The dove came back to him toward evening, and there in its bill was a plucked-off olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the waters had decreased on the earth.”

Genesis 8:11

The olive is the sign of a reborn world, a world rid of evil and cleansed of destructive forces. As we eat our olive, let us pray that the evil forces that hold our precious hostages soon will be destroyed as well and the world cleansed from their evil presence.



Each participant takes a date

The righteous are like the date as the verse says:

צְדִיק כַּתְּמָר יִפְרַח כְּאֶרֶז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגָּה

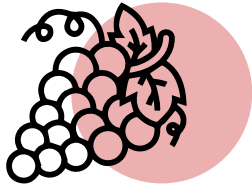
“The righteous bloom like a date-palm;
they thrive like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalms 92:13

Just as no part of the date palm is wasted—its dates are eaten; its young branches are used for the lulav on Sukkot; its fronds are used for schach to cover the Sukkah; its fibers are used to make ropes; and its trunks are used for roof beams, so too every Jew has something incredibly valuable to offer the world.

Those that are still held hostage are righteous people, they each give so much to the world. They are historians, mathematicians, and scientists. They are musicians, artists, and poets. And so much more. These righteous souls are still suffering in captivity and we must do whatever we can to set them free.

As we eat our dates, let us reflect on what we can do to help these righteous souls bloom and flourish once again.



Each participant pours a cup of white wine or grape juice:

The Talmud says:

אָמַר רַבִּן שִׁמּוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל: לֹא הָיוּ יָמִים טוֹבִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל כַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר
בְּאָב וּכְיוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים שֶׁבָּהֶן יוֹצְאוֹת בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם בְּכָלֵי לְבָן

“Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: There were no days as joyous for Israel as the fifteenth of Av and as Yom Kippur, on which the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in white garments.”

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Ta’anit, 30b

On the special day of Tu B’Av the young girls would go out with white clothing to celebrate a new beginning, it was a day when mourning and sadness come to an end and a new season of joy begins. It was a day of white newness as the dark sadness fades away.

On Tu B’Shvat, we are exactly 6 months away from Tu B’Av. May we immediately experience the joy of seeing our hostages released and an end of sadness speedily in our days.

Closing: A Song of Ascents- Shir HaMaalot

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת בְּשׁוֹב ה' אֶת־שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הֵיִינוּ כְּחֻלְמִים: אֲזַ יִמְלֵא שְׂחֹק
פִּינוּ וּלְשׁוֹנֵנוּ רִנָּה אֲזַ יֵאמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם הַגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת עִם־אֱלֹהֵי: הַגְדִּיל ה'
לַעֲשׂוֹת עִמָּנוּ הֵיִינוּ שְׂמֵחִים: שׁוֹבָה ה' אֶת שְׁבִיתָנוּ כְּאֶפְיָקִים בְּנִגְבִּ:
הַזְרְעִים בְּדַמְעָה בְּרִנָּה יִקְצְרוּ:
הַלֹּךְ יִלֵךְ וּבָכָה נִשְׂא מִשֶּׁךְ־הַזֶּרַע בֹּא יָבֵא בְרִנָּה נִשְׂא אֶלְמוֹתָיו:

A song of ascents. When G-d brings back those who will return to Zion, it will be as if we were dreaming. Our mouths shall be filled with laughter, our tongues, with songs of joy. Then shall they say among the nations: “G-d has done great things for them!”

G-d will do great things for us and we shall rejoice.

Bring back those that must return like roaring waters in the Negev. They who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy.

Though he goes along weeping, carrying the seed-bag, he shall come back with songs of joy, carrying his sheaves.

Psalms 126

This psalm is sung before the Grace after Meals on Shabbat.

Read the verses carefully, paying attention to their meaning.

We hope and pray that these verses which so accurately describe the plight of our hostages be fulfilled immediately.

This unit was developed in partnership with BBYO

