

Tu BiShvat Reflections in a Post October 7th World

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A day to celebrate the trees in Israel never seemed far-fetched to me. After all, it is not just about the trees, the dates or the carob or even ecology; it is about the State of Israel. Growing up in Habonim-Dror, Tu B'Shvat celebrated the Labor Zionists who established the kibbutzim and, through their work, created a lush country with a cornucopia of delicious fruits and vegetables, which always tasted better in Israel than anywhere else.

As I entered Kibbutz Kfar Azza in December with my heart in the pit of my stomach, that lushness still surrounded a beautiful kibbutz that will never be the same. I walked speechless through the horrors of the rows of houses closest to the border. These houses belonged to the young, post Army of the kibbutz. There are signs in front of the houses of those taken hostage, missing and murdered. As I turned the corner to continue our trip, I came across a beautiful orange tree. The destruction of October 7th could not destroy the citrus season! The oranges were ripe and falling off the trees. As we continued our walk through the kibbutz, I saw pomelo trees, luscious lemons, and even flowers beside what had been razed.

These citrus trees reminded me in December of what Zionism is all about. It is what is possible in a desert, it is what we can all create when we work together, and it is what provides me with hope during this time of war.

This Tu BiShvat, as I sing of almond trees blooming (“hashkediah porachat...”) I will be inspired by that pomelo. That pomelo with hard skin, that takes time not to just peel but to pull off the pith and get to the sweet juicy inside. The fruit that I call the social fruit that is best eaten outside in Israel with friends.

Whether at your Tu BiShvat Seder, planting a tree, or however you celebrate this day, may you find time to see new meaning this Tu BiShvat.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei pri ha'etz.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of all being, creator of the fruit of the tree.

Taken from the Masorti Tu B'Shvat 2024 Seder Guide linked at azm.org/tu-bshvat

Zerayim Shel Shalom – Seeds of Peace by Zohar Malki, aged 9 of Nahal Oz

<p>יום אחד חלמתי חלום ובו אני זורעת זרעים של שלום, זרעים שיובילו להפסקת המלחמות, זרעים שיעזרו להפסקת המריבות. יצאתי לגנה והתחלתי לחשב,</p>	<p>One day I dreamt a dream and in it I am sowing seeds of peace, seeds that will bring an end to wars, seeds that will help end conflict. I went out to the garden and began to think,</p>
<p>איך אשתל עץ שיגרום לנו לאהב ולהיות יותר מאוחדים ללא מריבות וללא סכסוכים. את העץ אבחר לנטע בלב של כל אחד, כך הוא יהפוך להיות העץ הכי מיוחד, הוא יאפשר לכלים להיות חברים טובים שזה לזה תמיד עוזרים, עץ של שלום, אהבה ואחדות שימנע מכל אחד הרגשה של בדידות.</p>	<p>How can I plant a tree that will cause us to love and to be more unified without conflicts and arguments? I will choose to plant this tree in each person's heart, thus it will become the most precious tree, it will enable all of us to be great friends, each of us will always helping others, a tree of peace, love, and unity that will stop anyone from feeling alone.</p>