

Beth Chayim Chadashim
Tu B'shevat - "Live" from the Red Tent
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Drash by Miri Hunter Harauch

It's Tu B'Shvat! Another full moon, another Jewish Holiday where I will walk into a room and be in community – a diverse community. A place where we all neither look, think nor act alike, but worship together. We are from different cultures, backgrounds and even different religious paths, but we come here to celebrate, to praise, to learn, to eat and to be in community. It's our home for the holidays. Would our home for the holidays be as wonderful and warm and inviting if we brought part of ourselves to the door but then left some of ourselves at home? Would our celebration of community be the same. And which part, to leave at home? How would one make such a choice? But we do? Between socialization and just bad days.

We make the choice everyday. But I know, like most of you know, that we have a better a time when with the sum of all of our parts are accepted and in attendance at the party. No part left behind. SO MOSES CRIED OUT TO GOD, AND GOD SHOWED HIM A TREE; HE THREW IT INTO THE WATER AND THE WATER SWEETENED. This quote from the Torah, says, that in order for the water, the flow of our lives to be sweet we can't leave any of ourselves out. If something is missing or left out, things are not as sweet. If we want the waters of our life to be sweet, we need the tree – the sweetener. But what about God? What does God need to be sweet? We spend much time talking about God as if He was outside the room, a third party. We debate endlessly over god's gender. God is referred to as He. Worshipped as He, and prayed to as He. But that doesn't feel quite right, because the feminine is left out. So let's call God She. No, then the masculine is left out. God cannot be He or She. Let us call God IT. Can God be IT?

In a community where inclusivity is so important IT might seem a valuable solution. Neuter. Neither this nor that. But none of us is actually ever neuter or neutral about anything so political as gender or gender identity. Would God Be? Wouldn't the waters of celebration and worship be sweetened by allowing our image of Divinity to encompass all that is us. All of our community? What word would that be? Think about it. Did not God, dare I say Goddess, create us in the Divine image. Look around at your neighbors. Your neighbor is Divinity, created in the image of the creator. I cannot call Divinity IT, because in essence I would be calling you and myself it. And I am not of a neutral gender, and neither is anyone here. However we define ourselves, we cannot define our Maker as anything less or different because that becomes the image of creation. As we look around the room or our neighborhood we can all honestly say to our neighbor in the room, or the one who lives next door, I was created in the image of Divinity. I am bringing my wholeself to the party, the celebration. I am sweetening the waters of life by diving into living with my wholeself.

I know what you are thinking. I don't feel very Divine right now. Right now I'm tired, right now, I just want to bless the bread and go home, right now I don't have time to remember my Divinity I

have too much on my mind, budgets to plan, a building to buy, a lover who is mad at me, children who need this or that.....there is no time for me to remember that I am Divine. I don't even remember where I parked the car! Alas this is the most important time to Remember. In Judaism we are called to Remember, we are asked to remember. What if Moses had said as he stood at the Red Sea, with the Nation of Israel at his back saying, "What now Moses?" What if he didn't remember to call to God. What if Moses had said, "I'm too tired." What if he didn't remember that he was created in a Divine image and only brought part of himself to the Red Sea. Then where would we be? What if Miriam just didn't feel like raising her timbrel and dancing as a way to inspire us, if she hadn't brought all of herself and shared all of her talents with the people of Israel, where would we be? We do not need to neutralize Divinity. We are the essence of Divinity. Let us celebrate Divinity in all facets. In each of our moments: the sad ones and the joyous ones, the moments of grief and of bliss. Those moments carry their own Divinity! Divine as we are all Divine.

When we see someone who needs a hug and we are feeling tired, think about giving that hug away.....making contact. Remember the Divinity in the human touch to another human. In a hurry to get home? How much time would it take to let that car get in front of you with a smile. What does God, Goddess, Adonai, Elohim, Shekhinah The One, The All need to be sweet? Perhaps it is simply for us to remember our Divinity. Each experience is a part of the growth, another spirial on the Tree of Life, another moment to grow in Wisdom, another opportunity to sweeten the waters of our lives. SO MOSES CRIED OUT TO GOD, AND GOD SHOWED HIM A TREE; HE THREW IT INTO THE WATER AND THE WATER SWEETENED. Let us remember to cry out as Moses did. Let us open our eyes, dive into the water and taste sweetness. The sweetness that is the result of recognizing and accepting all of ourselves. That's the party, that's the celebration that we can all go to.