

A Tu B'Shevat Seder

For Jewish Disabilities Awareness and Inclusion Month

Jewish
Disability
Awareness &
Inclusion
Month



The Tu B'Shevat seder is a celebration of our relationship with nature and with fruit trees in particular, and a time for reflection. The Tu B'Shevat seder is split into four sections, each centering around a different category of fruit and its attributes. Usually, we use these attributes to reflect on **GROWTH** – both natural growth (of trees and plants) and personal growth (how we each change as the seasons pass). This Tu B'Shevat seder is a different. February is **Jewish Disabilities Awareness and Inclusion Month**. Just as our table is set with so many different kinds of fruit, there are also many different kinds of people in our school, our community and in our world – and today we honor the **DIVERSITY OF ABILITIES** that make our communities so rich.

First Cup – Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Fruits and nuts with a hard outside and an edible inside

[pour a glass of white grape juice, say the blessing, and drink about ½ of the cup]

Autism is a developmental disability that usually appears during the first three years of life. The cause is unknown. It affects how a person's brain works, but not all people with autism are affected the same way.

When a person has autism, they may have difficulty:

- letting you know what they want;
- understanding what others say or want;
- ignoring sounds and lights;
- ignoring things/ people that are moving;
- being touched;
- understanding social rules;
- showing affection;
- controlling their feelings;
- knowing how to play with other kids; or
- dealing with changes

Text adapted from: Disability Awareness Activity Packet, Bev Adcock and Michael L. Remus (1996)

Autism is a “spectrum disorder.” That means that not everyone with autism has all of these challenges. One person may have difficulty with three of the categories listed while another person has only one. Some people with autism have trouble being touched while others like to hug. Many people with autism like to do things in the same order all the time and have things arranged the same way. Organization and routine helps them stay calm. Other people with autism have a very hard time ignoring noises, especially if they are upset or in a new situation. They may try to calm themselves by rocking, moaning, talking loudly or even screaming. They may also try to go under a desk or in a small, dark place where they feel safer.

Why do you think that **fruits and nuts with a hard outside and an edible inside** are paired with **Autism Spectrum Disorder**?

Eat things like: **Oranges | Coconut | Walnuts | Pistachios**

Second Cup – Physical Disabilities

Fruits with pits in the center

[Add a few drops of red grape juice and fill the rest with white. Say the blessing, and drink about ½]



There are a large variety of different physical disabilities – which ones can you think of? What features or resources can we identify at GJC that help people with physical disabilities?

Why do you think that **fruits with pits in the center** have been paired with **physical disabilities**?

Eat things like: Cherries | Olives | Plums | Avocados | Dates

Third Cup – Learning and Intellectual Disabilities

Fruits that are entirely edible

[Refill the glass so that there is now about ½ white and ½ red grape juice. Say the blessing and drink about ½]

There are many different kinds of learning disabilities, which can range from mild to severe problems. Some people have trouble processing words they are reading, others find it challenging to process sounds they hear. Dyslexia can cause a person to see letters switched around when they read (seeing “bule” instead of “blue,” for example). Have you ever felt like you were struggling against what your brain may be telling you?

Why do you think that **fruits that are entirely edible** are paired with **learning disabilities**?

Eat things like: Grapes | Raisins | Blueberries | Raspberries | Figs

Fourth Cup – Invisible or Unseen Disabilities

Sweet smelling, but inedible things

[Fill the rest of the glass with red grape juice, the whole thing should be almost 100% red. Say the blessing, and drink it]

Not all disabilities are obvious; they’re not like eye color or height. You can’t always tell that someone has a disability just by looking. What is something different about the way that you learn or interact in the world that people might not know about you... just by looking?

Smell things like: Cinnamon | Rosemary | Bay Leaves | Ceder

