



Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies

OF AMERICAN JEWISH UNIVERSITY

Today's Torah

Tu Bishvat

January 28, 2021 | Shevat 15, 5781

For Every Friend There is a Season - Tu Bishvat Reimagined

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Recently one of my closest friends from college popped up on my Facebook feed. I liked her status, browsed her pictures, sent her a greeting and continued scrolling. But I could not help thinking how weird it was to see someone who was a huge part of my life in my twenties, now relegated to not much more than a Facebook friend.

It made me wonder, were we truly friends? Or was it just convenience, proximity or something else entirely?

For a time, I believed that friends that did not last the test of time, were not “real” friends, but as I have aged, my beliefs have changed. Most of our friends are friends for a season. Perhaps we connected because we were at the same developmental stage like college, or we connected due to a shared personal experience like a bad breakup, or even some shared passion such as tennis; but sometimes once that stage was over, our connection faded.

Sometimes it was mutual. There was an understanding on both parts that our lives were going in different directions. But other times it was harder. We were on two different pages. She wanted to let go, I didn't or vice versa. And without the distinct markers of a romantic relationship, the transition to post break up became even more complicated.

It was well into my forties that I finally learned to embrace and accept the seasons of my friendships and it was due a lesser known holiday in the Jewish calendar, Tu Bishvat, the New Years for the Trees. Today for me this holiday marks more than just the change from winter into spring.

It is the day to pause and reflect on our friendships, the allegorical leaves on our trees. Just like most trees are not evergreen and will shed their leaves to make way for a new season many of our friendships will only last one or two seasons. Rather than dismiss this relationship for its impermanence, honor this companion for traveling with you during this sacred period of your life.

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Appreciate that she helped you navigate a loss, survive a job or weather a pandemic. Embrace the lessons, celebrate the blessings and then look with optimism and faith to the spring that lies ahead.



Rabbi Sherre Hirsch currently is the Chief Innovation Officer for American Jewish University, developing the vision, strategic initiative and implementation for the campuses. Rabbi Hirsch made headlines as the first female rabbi at Sinai Temple, the largest Conservative congregation on the West Coast.

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