

Linda's Column

Sometimes we hear about upcoming holidays and we can't quite remember what they're commemorating or what activities and foods are associated with them. Trees? The Torah? Lighting candles? Costumes? Hamentaschen? Cheesecake?

Following is an article written by Ruth Abrams, Managing Editor of Interfaithfamily.com, who has graciously allowed us to reprint her "Jewish Holiday Cheat Sheet" below.

Jewish Holidays Cheat Sheet

By Ruth Abrams

Jan. 29, 2009

A quick--as quick as I could make it!--run-down of the Jewish holidays with need-to-know information on each. A word on "time of year"--the Jewish calendar and the secular, Gregorian calendar are not in sync, so sometimes people will have to look at a calendar to know exactly when a holiday is, or say that a holiday falls "early" or "late" this year.

Tu B'Shvat, The New Year for Trees

Hebrew name means: 15th day of Hebrew month of Shvat

What's it about? When the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing, Jews offered the first fruits of their trees on the Shavuot holiday. The trees had to be at least four years old, and this date was for figuring out the age of the trees. You could call it the official tree birthday. These days it's a great time to think about trees and the environment.

Pronounce it: too beh'she'vat

When is it:

January 28, 2010

January 20, 2011

January 29, 2012

Foods: Fruit, nuts and other things that grow on or in trees

Activities: Many ordinary Jews have reclaimed the mystical practice of the Tu B'Shvat Seder, or ritual meal--a great opportunity to explore environmentalist themes in Judaism. Another practice is to plant trees. This is a minor holiday in that there is no traditional obligation not to work.

Symbols of holiday: Trees and tree fruit

Greeting? There is no official greeting for this holiday. Hag Sameah (Happy holiday) with a heavy guttural h at the beginning of the first word and the end of the second.

Read more: [Tu B'Shvat](#) on My Jewish Learning, a non-denominational Jewish website.

Purim

Hebrew name means: Lots. Refers to Esther 3:7, in which the villain Haman draws lots to set the date for the Jews' destruction.

What's it about? Celebration of a narrow escape from genocide described in the biblical Book of Esther.

Pronounce it: Poor-im.

When is it:

February 28, 2010

March 20, 2011

March 8, 2012

Foods: Triangular pastries called hamantashen (Haman's pockets), named for the bad guy in the Book of Esther. Some Jews also eat other foods with things hidden inside, like dumplings, other sweets and goodies, and alcohol.

Activities: On Purim we read the Book of Esther, wear costumes, eat triangular cookies and other treats, and use noisemakers. It's also traditional to give money to charity, send anonymous packages of goodies to your friends (called mishloach manot or shaloch mones) and to get drunk. This is a minor holiday in that there is no traditional obligation not to work.

Symbols of Holiday: Masks, costumes, noisemakers called graggers, hamantashen.

Greeting? Happy Purim! You can say "Purim Sameah," which means "happy Purim," if you can pronounce the heavy guttural h at the end of Sameah.

Read more: [Purim](#) on My Jewish Learning, a non-denominational Jewish website.

[Click Here](#) to read the full article at [InterfaithFamily.com](#)

Please contact me with any questions or suggestions you may have. If you would like to be added to our interfaith eNewsletter distribution list – please call or email me.

Thank you,

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