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Willows are signs of joy and sadness

The beautiful pussy willow tree by my back door is in full bloom. Of all the many trees in my yard, it is our favorite, and was a major factor in our decision to purchase this home nearly 10 years ago. Since

then, we have cut branches each year and rooted them, so that now we have several smaller pussy willow trees across the back of our lot.

When cut inside, pussy willows, also called catkins, are said to bring good luck to a home.

In many northern European countries pussy willows have long been used as a substitute for palm branches in Christian Palm Sunday rituals.

WHILE PUSSEY willows are a sign of spring, new birth and gladness, other members of the willow family are traditionally symbolic of sadness, perhaps because of the similarity between weeping willows and falling tears.

In the Bible, we find references to the willow as both a tree of joy and a tree of sadness. Leviticus 23:40 reads: "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of thick trees and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days."

But in Psalm 137 we read: "we wept when we remembered Zion. We hunged our harps upon the willows. Perhaps, Leviticus referred to the pussy willow and Psalm to the weeping willow tree.

AN ANCIENT English ballad "Sing All A Green Willow" is the lamentation of a



lover for the inconsistency of his mistress. Shakespeare uses a form of this song in "Othello."

Shakespeare employs the willow as a symbol of sadness again and again. Lorenzo in "Merchant of Venice" narrates: "In such a night stood Othello, with a willow in her hand upon the wild sea banks."

In Hamlet, Ophelia hangs her wild flowers on a "willow aslant a brook" before drowning herself.

In witchcraft, wands made from willow are believed to have special powers and are used for particular rituals and rites.

WILLOW BOUGHS, like those of hazel, often were used in the past for divination. An old English custom required that a maiden who wished to see her future mate run around the outside of the house three times with a willow wand in her left hand, calling out "the that be the man for me, grip the branch from the willow tree." On the third time around, she was supposed to see the likeness of her husband-to-be grasping the other end of the wand for just a moment.

The bark of the willow was used by witches in the making of many home remedies. Today, willows are a source of salicylic acid, which is used in the treatment of rheumatism and the manufacture of aspirin.

You may write Gabriella at: Box 424, Garden City 6013. For a personal reply, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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Red Magen David plan fundraiser

The Women's Committee of the Michigan Region, American Red Magen David for Israel, will have their annual fundraiser, an art auction at 1 p.m. Sunday, April 11 at Kingsley Inn, 1475 Woodward, Bloomfield Hills.

A Champagne Preview will begin at 1 p.m. and the auction will start promptly at 2 p.m.

Harry Weissman will be the auctioneer and many interesting pieces will be included in the sale. In addition to paintings, there are numerous old marriage certificates, called Ketubbas from ancient Persia, copper pieces and unusual sculpture.

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