



Tu B'Shvat טו בשבט **Hazon's Seder and Sourcebook**

*"...the Torah is a commentary on the world,
and the world is a commentary on the Torah..."*

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Welcome

In its origins, Tu B'Shvat addressed the most practical of questions: when did the tax year begin and end? An agrarian society in which tithes were taken and given required that a person know in what year a particular harvest was counted.

But Jewish tradition is a meaning-seeking tradition; a tradition in which answers are important but questions are vital. So when Jewish people ceased to have governmental power in the land of Israel, and ceased to pay tithes within their own commonwealth, the question arose: what now is Tu B'Shvat?

The answer to that question has evolved over time. For much of Jewish history, Tu B'Shvat has been a memory rather than a lived experience. And its shape and meaning has grown and changed. (There's more on the history of Tu B'Shvat on page 16, in an article I wrote for *The Jerusalem Report* three years ago.)

For me today, Tu B'Shvat represents a particular example of an important general proposition: not merely that Jewish tradition is vital and evolving but that to make sense it needs each of us to engage it with integrity. That means treating the tradition with respect, and also treating with respect the real questions I have and the real challenges I face in my life. This is one of the meanings of Hazon's theme quote (from the late Reb Shlomo Carlebach, of blessed memory), "The Torah is a commentary on the world, and the world is a commentary on the Torah."

I don't really understand the mysticism of the masters of Tzefat. Nor do I always find it easy to live in best practice with the physical world that sustains me. Nor do I find a simple answer to the question of how I relate (in different ways) to the lands of Israel, the United States, and to England. Yet a Tu B'Shvat seder involves reflecting on these aspects of our tradition, and of my life. And it's genuinely a time of celebration. It's a time of simcha; the joy that we share with others. It's a time of learning and singing, and of eating with gusto – and awareness. As with other moments within the Jewish year, my hope is that it bring out the best in me, in relation to others and to the world around us. If it has worked its ancient/new magic, and if I've engaged in a real way, then this year I should be a little different in the world than I was last year.

Reb Shlomo taught that each of the holidays reminds us of something that we should really be thinking about all year long. For Tu B'Shvat, that means thinking about our relationship with the physical world, and especially what it means to eat locally and eat well. Hazon is doing more and more work to enable people within and beyond the Jewish community to connect the dots between the rich tradition of eating in Jewish culture and the many ways that our eating so influences the world today. My hope for all of us this Tu B'Shvat is that this holiday helps us to grow and deepen our awareness of our connection to Jewish history, to the land, to the food we eat and to each other.

Tu B'Shvat sameach,
Nigel

What is Tu B'Shvat?

Tu B'Shvat (טו בְּשֵׁבַט) is a Jewish holiday in the Hebrew month of Shvat, usually in late January or early February, that marks the “New Year of the Trees”. Tu B'Shvat is one of four New Years mentioned in the Mishnah. Customs include planting trees and eating dried fruits and nuts, especially figs, pomegranates, dates, almonds, and carob.

The name Tu B'Shvat is derived from the Hebrew date of the holiday, which occurs on the 15th day of Shvat (שבט). “Tu” stands for the Hebrew numerals “tet vav” (ט & ו) which is 15.

Tu B'shvat has become the Jewish Earth Day. Ecological organizations in the United States (like Hazon) and Israel have adopted it to further environmental awareness.

There are many other customs associated with Tu B'Shvat. A well known custom is to eat lots of fruit. Because Tu B'Shvat falls on the 15th day of the Hebrew month, Shvat, some people try to eat 15 kinds of fruit.

What is a Tu B'Shvat Seder?

In the Middle Ages, Tu B'Shvat was celebrated with a feast of fruits in keeping with the Mishnaic description of the holiday as a “New Year.” In the 1600s, the mystic kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria, of Tzfat, and his disciples instituted a Tu B'Shvat seder in which the fruits and trees of Israel were given symbolic meaning. The main idea was that eating ten specific fruits and drinking four cups of wine in a specific order while reciting the appropriate blessings would bring human beings, and the world, closer to spiritual perfection. The mystical kabbalistic Tu B'Shvat seder has been revived, and is now celebrated by many Jews, religious and secular. Special haggadot have been written for this purpose – like this compilation.

The structure of a Tu B'Shvat Seder often corresponds to the four “worlds” – levels, realms, or spheres through which, the Kabbalists teach, the life-giving flow of the Divine is channeled and filtered. All fruits are divided into categories representing the first three worlds (*Asiyah*, *Yetzirah*, *Briya*). The fourth world, *Atzilut*, has no representative fruits because it is pure spirit and cannot be represented physically. The three “lower” worlds are ordered according to how close they are to the world of pure spirit. The further away they are the more protection is needed for the holiness within. Wines, Planets, energy, and basically all else is also divided into categories that are associated with one of the four worlds. All of this can be used in the seder to create more meaning and beauty.

Introduction

The four faces of Tu B'Shvat

By Dr. Jeremy Benstein, The Heschel Center, Tel Aviv

We are a peculiar people, scheduling our nature festival in the dead of winter. But Tu Bishvat, the festival of trees and their fruit, didn't start out as a Jewish Earth Day, or even Arbor Day. A closer look at the varied "incarnations" of this minor holiday through history reveals four facets of our interdependence with trees and the natural world to contemplate and to celebrate.

The Economic: We derive physical sustenance from nature, quantifiable in economic terms. Up through Mishnaic times, Tu Bishvat, the 15th of the Hebrew month of Shvat, was comparable to "Tu B'April" for Americans — a date relevant to calculation of taxes. The exact middle of winter was chosen as the end of the arboreal fiscal year: tithes on fruit after this date belonged to the next year. So the Mishnah in Tractate Rosh Hashanah labels it "the New Year of the trees." The Israelites didn't sweat over tax forms, though, worrying about getting a check to some priestly IRS. Economics and spirituality were more integrated: part of the fruitful bounty received from God via trees was 'returned to God' via the priests and the Temple, while part was redistributed to care for the poor. After the

Exile, with no trees of our own to tithe, the date's significance waned. Like a tree, the holiday remained dormant — blooming again over a millennium later.

The Spiritual: The natural world is the ground of our spiritual lives, source of symbolism and meaning. 16th century kabbalists gave Tu Bishvat a second efflorescence. They taught of the cosmic Tree of the Sefirot, the divine emanations, conceived as the blueprint for the creation of the world and a map of the mind of God. The Tu Bishvat seder was born of their innovative ritual creativity. Like the Pesah seder, this festive meal centered on four cups of wine and symbolic foods. But here, the wine progresses from white to red, symbolizing quiescence to full flowering, or masculine to feminine. And the foods eaten at this uniquely vegan Jewish feast are all fruits – from those with thick peels, symbolizing gross physicality, through pure unprotected fruit, suggesting a more spiritual realm. The wines and fruits signify the four worlds or levels of creation and the soul, often labeled as the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual.

The National-Political: The landscapes of our homelands are a source of memory, identity and expression. With the Zionist return to the land, Tu Bishvat was transformed yet again. In a new act of ritual creativity, Jewish schoolteachers of pre-state Palestine made Tu Bishvat a day of tree planting, a festival of reforestation efforts, re-rooting and reconnecting to land and landscape. Today, tree planting, in person or by proxy, remains the most prevalent observance of Tu Bishvat. Though trees have unfortunately become a political pawn in the national struggles over this land, with aggressive plantings and uprootings taking place on both sides, the visceral significance of actually rooting a tree in the soil establishes an undeniable physical connection with the land.

The Ecological: We are part of an interconnected, inter-dependent universal web of life. Universalizing this connection leads directly to the latest metamorphosis: Tu Bishvat as Jewish Earth Day. Building on the activism of the Zionists, the day has become a framework for Jews to focus their concern with environmental issues of potentially global import. From ecology we learn that trees in the Amazon basin are integral to our health and well-being, confirming the interdependence of all things. As part of this new interpretation of the holiday, the mystic seder has gained newfound prominence, affirming the deep spiritual and physical significance of the natural world in our lives.

The Synthesis: Integrating these fragmented relationships can heal ourselves and the world.

Taken alone, each component can easily get out of whack: the economic can become merely utilitarian; the spiritual, overly abstract; and the national, risks degenerating into chauvinism. An overarching, contemporary social-environmental perspective provides a unifying synthesis. In their seder, the kabbalists aimed at uniting all the realms and worlds. In our many-layered Tu Bishvat, we too can strive to integrate and deepen the four interlocking realms that define our relationship to life and land: economic, spiritual, national-political and ecological. Each can, indeed must, inform and help guide the others, together creating a healing, balanced, sustainable, and sustaining whole. Moreover, in celebrating Tu Bishvat we can integrate the particular: the personal, fruit-giving tree of the Mishnah, and the replanted national trees of Israel, with the universal: the life-giving global trees of the ecosphere and the Life-giving cosmic tree of Kabbalah. And while Tu Bishvat gives us a profound festive opportunity to celebrate and reflect on these relationships, in the face of deepening environmental crises in Israel and around the world we need to affirm and integrate them all the year round.

Introduction

The Four Worlds of Tu B'Shvat

	First World	Second World	Third World	Fourth World
Sphere (Kabbalah)	עשיה Assiyah Action	יצירה Yetzirah Formation	בריאה Briyah Thought	אצילות Atzilut Spirit
Kavanah	Groundedness Defense	Growth Creativity	Openness Abundance	Mystery Wholeness
Element	Earth	Water	Air	Fire
Season	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
Symbolic foods	<i>Hard outside, soft inside:</i> Orange, Banana, Walnut, Almond, Pomegranate	<i>Soft outside, hard inside:</i> Dates, olives, apricots, plums	<i>All soft, edible:</i> Blueberries, Strawberries, Raspberries	no food
Wine	white	1/2 white, 1/2 red	1/4 white, 3/4 red	red, with a drop of white
Aspects of Self	Physical	Emotional	Intellectual	Spiritual

The concept of four sections to the Seder traces back to the four cups of the Passover Seder, which also includes four questions, four sons, and four phrases of redemption. Other “fours” in Jewish tradition include the four species on Sukkot and the story of the four rabbis in the Talmud who go to “Pardes” and are effected in different ways. **What other sets of four can you think of?**

Blessings: Noticing the holy in the everyday

These blessings are traditionally recited as part of a Tu B'Shvat seder. As you eat different fruits and nuts, ask whether they grew on a tree or in the ground. Don't know? Our tradition says: find out!

Wine

Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, Sovereign of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, borei peri ha-gafen.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

Fruit from the earth

Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, Sovereign of the Universe, Creator of fruit of the earth.

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, borei peri ha-adamah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאָדָמָה:

Fruit from trees

Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, Sovereign of the Universe, Creator of fruit of the tree.

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, borei peri ha-etz.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ:

Shehechyanu

Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who has caused us to live, and has sustained us, and has enabled us to come to this time.

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam, she-hecheyanu, ve-kiyemanu ve-higiyanu la-zeman ha-zeh.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעַנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

God Language

Some people have amended the traditional God-language of brachot to reflect their theological outlooks and ethical concerns. While reciting the blessings shown here and those in the liturgy, the following elements can be combined to create alternative formulas.

<i>barukh 'atah adonai</i>	בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה	Blessed are you Adonai
<i>berukha 'at yah</i>	בְּרוּכָה אַתָּה יָה	Blessed are you Yah
<i>nevarekh 'et</i>	נְבָרְךָ אֵת	Let us Bless
<i>eloheynu</i>	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	our God
<i>he-shekhina</i>	הַשְּׁכִינָה	the Shekhina
<i>'ein ha-chayim</i>	עֵין הַחַיִּים	Source of Life
<i>melekh ha-'olam</i>	מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם	Sovereign of the universe
<i>chey ha-'olamim</i>	חַי הָעוֹלָמִים	Life of all the universe
<i>ruach ha-'olam</i>	רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם	Spirit of the universe

The Tu B'Shvat Seder

I. עשיה Assiya: The World of Action

Acknowledging that the act of creation is both primary and perpetual, we begin our Tu B'Shvat seder by sharing a blessing for the beauty of the continual act of creation in our world. We say together:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam, oseh ma'asei v'reisheet.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who continually does the work of creation.

First Cup of Wine

Our first cup of wine is pure white like the winter. It represents the beginning, the time when creation began with the separation of light from darkness. The seedling of the tree is like this first light. It is a spark of divine creation which contains within it the potential to become a tree. We each fill our cup with white wine, say the blessing together, and then drink only half of the wine in the cup:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן:

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
borei p'ri hagafen.*

Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Hand Washing

Everyone at the table is now invited to perform the ritual hand-washing by pouring fresh water over her or his hands. Afterwards, we say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם.

*Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam
asher kideshanu be-mitzvotav ve-tzivanu
al netilat yadayim.*

Blessed are you, Eternal God, Sovereign of the Universe who has sanctified us with Your commandments and has commanded us on the washing of hands.

The Breaking of Bread

We break bread together at the start of our seder as an ancient act of fellowship—individual loaves are shared among many as a symbol of our shared dependence on sustenance from the earth. As we enjoy the sumptuous taste and texture of bread in our mouths, we reflect on the sweetness of wheat grain, the first and most essential of the seven species of ancient biblical fruits. We lift a loaf of bread at each table as each person places her or his hand on it.

We say the blessing before tearing them into portions.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ

*Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,
ha-motzi lehem min ha-aretz.*

Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe who brings forth bread from the earth.

First Fruit

Asiyah, the lowest world, is the realm of the concrete, the physical. At this level, the need is greatest for protection, for shields and defenses. It is risky, at this level, to let our defenses down, to open up, to peel off protective shells. Being furthest away from perfection, this world is represented by fruits or nuts with an inedible outer shell and an edible inner core: almond, banana, brazil nut, cherimoya, coconut, durian, grapefruit, guava, hazel nut, kiwano, orange, papaya, passion fruit, pecan, persimmon, pineapple, pistachio, pomegranate, pomelo, sabra, ugly fruit or walnut.

Food Meditation

We each take a piece of fruit which we have never tried before, or have not eaten yet this season to use with the guided meditation. During the meditation, we will recite the blessing for fruit:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ:

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
borei p'ri ha'eitz.*

Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, creator of the fruit of the tree

A Prayer for Special Occasions

Once when Rav Kook was walking in the fields, lost deep in thought, the young student with him absentmindedly plucked a leaf off of a branch. Rav Kook was visibly shaken by this act and, turning to his companion he said gently, "Believe me when I tell you that I never simply pluck a leaf or a blade of grass or any living thing unless I have to. Every part of the vegetable world is singing a song and breathing forth a secret of divine mystery of the creation." We sing together:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
shehecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh.*
Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who has kept us in life, sustained us and permitted us to reach this season, amen.

I Am Kadosh

“ADONAI SPOKE TO MOSES,
SAYING: SPEAK TO THE WHOLE
ISRAELITE COMMUNITY AND SAY
TO THEM: KEDOSHIM YOU SHALL
BE, FOR KADOSH AM I, ADONAI,
YOUR GOD. LOVE YOUR FELLOW
AS YOURSELF: I AM ADONAI.” -
Leviticus 19:1-2, 19:8

1. How are the two mitzvot (commandments) from the passage above connected to our relationship with the environment?
2. Is there anything you will not eat or do because you feel that it is not kadosh* enough?
3. How does the Jewish imperative to “love your fellow as yourself” inform your environmental choices?

* The Hebrew word kadosh (plural: kedoshim) is difficult to translate directly into English. Some possible meanings: separate, distinct, special, sacred, or holy.

II. יצירה Yetzirah: World of Formation

Second Cup of Wine

Our second cup of wine consists partly of white light--the spark of Divine holiness. Yet, we already see the red flame of life which has begun to burn within it. The flame symbolizes the tree's growth as she is nourished. Beginning as a small sapling, she starts to gain her physical and spiritual strength from the four basic elements: earth, water, air and fire. Her small trunk reaches toward the sun, her roots soak up water from the ground, her tiny leaves breathe in air, and the fire of life swells within her.

We add red wine to the white wine that is already in our cups, so that the cup is again full, say the blessing together, and then again drink only half of the wine in the cup:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן:

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
borei p'ri hagafen.*

Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Like a Palm Tree

THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL
FLOURISH LIKE THE PALM
TREE; THEY WILL GROW
LIKE CEDAR IN LEBANON.
- Psalm 92:13

We read in the Psalms: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." But why are the righteous likened to a palm and to a cedar? Because you find it true of the majority of trees that, even after they are cut down, a sprout may be taken from them and planted in another place, and they begin to grow again. But when the palm and the cedar are cut down, who can make others grow up in their stead except after many years and much labor? So, too, when a righteous man perishes from the world, who can make another stand up in his stead except after many years? - Midrash

Second Fruit

The Kabbalists defined the world of Yetzirah as a world of physicality. It is a realm of physicality, but, even more, of inwardness, of a sense of feeling. The need for protection and reinforcement is an inner matter of the core, of the heart. It is represented by fruits with edible outer flesh and pithy, inedible cores: apricot, avocado, cherry, date, mango, nectarine, olive, peach and plum. We each find a fruit from the second category, remove the pit or core, say the blessing together, and then eat.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ:

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
borei p'ri ha'eitz.*

Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, creator of the fruit of the tree

III. בְּרִיאָה B'riyah The World of Creation

Third Cup

This cup of wine is partly white and mostly red. The tree has rooted herself firmly in the earth, grown into its full being and is blooming. The shade, wood, herbs and flowers that are her simple and modest gifts to the earth and human-kind allow us to now see her and embrace her as provider.

We each add more red wine to the mixture of wine that is already in our cup, so that the cup is again full, say the blessing together, and then drink all of the wine in the cup except for a small drop:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
borei p'ri hagafen.*

Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Third Fruit

B'riyah, being closest to pure spirit of the three lower worlds, is represented by any fruits which are edible throughout. Here no protective shells, neither internal nor external are needed. These symbolic fruits may be eaten entirely and include: apple, blackberry, blueberry, carob, fig, grape, kiwi, kumquat, raspberry, pear, star fruit and strawberry.

We each find a fruit from the third category, say the blessing together, and then eat it:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ:

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
borei p'ri ha'eitz.*

Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, creator of the fruit of the tree

The Good Land

FOR ADONAI, YOUR GOD, BRINGS YOU TO A GOOD LAND, A LAND WITH STREAMS OF WATER, OF FOUNTAINS AND DEPTHS THAT SPRING OUT OF VALLEYS AND HILLS; A LAND OF WHEAT, AND BARLEY, AND GRAPE VINES, AND FIG TREES, AND POMEGRANATES; A LAND OF OLIVE OIL AND DATE HONEY;
A LAND WHERE YOU SHALL EAT BREAD WITHOUT SCARCENESS, YOU SHALL LACK NOTHING THERE; A LAND WHOSE STONES ARE MADE OF IRON AND FROM WHOSE MOUNTAINS YOU WILL MINE BRONZE. WHEN YOU HAVE EATEN AND ARE FULL, THEN YOU SHALL BLESS ADONAI FROM THE GOOD LAND WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO YOU.
- Deuteronomy 8:7-10

1. Is it possible today to achieve the type of feelings of completeness related to food and the land portrayed in this passage?
2. Every choice we make about what we eat and the resources we use has an impact on the "good land." How should we balance environmental factors with other needs and desires as we make these decisions?
3. Where do you personally feel a tension between your own lifestyle and its impact on the world?

IV. אצילות Atzilut: The World of Emmanation

Fourth Cup

This cup is the highest level of Creation. We see the tree all aflame with life, so much so that the red flame completely overpowers the white light which was its beginning. Here is the tree in her full glory. All aspects of growth and life are contained within her, and her divine spark is completely concealed. This deep red wine is the citrus whose fruits are now ripe, the etrog whose fragrance we enjoy in the fall, and the melon whose fruit is full of flavor in the summer. The cup of red wine symbolizes the source of our strength, the source of our connection with the earth.

We fill our cups once again with red wine, adding to the small drop at the bottom that still contains some white, say the blessing together and then drink the entire glass.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן:

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
borei p'ri hagafen.*

Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Fourth Fruit

The Kabbalists defined the world of Atzilut as the world of pure Spirit. We all have a relationship to the physical and to the intangible – that which is not physical. The fourth world is about our highest selves, when we are not eating, when we are not thinking of our bodies, in which we have all the tools to bring in pure holiness in each moment. Yes, we can emanate, be and are pure holiness and connection while eating and while grounded in our bodies, but this world, according to kabbalists, is the world that is floating above our earthly desires – sacred though they are. In an attempt to gain an understanding of the divine implications of this realm, we do as our ancestors did and look to the tree as a symbol of life – a life without shells, a life of replenishing the earth, and a life of balance in which there is an inherent understanding of the place of both humans and nature.

Planting our Own Seeds

RABBI YOHANAN SAID: ONE DAY, HONI THE CIRCLE MAKER WAS WALKING ON THE ROAD, AND HE SAW A MAN PLANTING A CAROB TREE. HE ASKED THE MAN, “HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE THIS TREE TO BEAR FRUIT?” THE MAN REPLIED, “SEVENTY YEARS.” HE ASKED, “ARE YOU QUITE SURE YOU WILL LIVE ANOTHER SEVENTY YEARS TO EAT ITS FRUIT?” THE MAN REPLIED, “I MYSELF FOUND FULLY GROWN CAROB TREES IN THE WORLD; AS MY FOREBEARS PLANTED FOR ME, SO AM I PLANTING FOR MY CHILDREN.”

- BASED ON TALMUD TA'ANIT 23A

Creative Seder Tip:

Fill a cup with some soil, bore a small hole in the soil, add a few seeds, cover the hole and then add water from the hand washing bowls.

Blessing after the meal

בְּרִיךְ רַחֲמָנָא
מְלִכָא דְעָלְמָא
מְרִיבָה דְהָאֵי פִּיתָא

Blessed is the Merciful One,
Ruler of the world,
Who created this bread.

וְאָכַלְתָּ, וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבֵרַכְתָּ

And you shall eat
and you shall be satisfied
and you shall bless

*Brich rachamana
Malka de-alma
Ma'arey de-hai pita*

You are the source of life for all that is
And your blessing flows through me

V'achalta v'savata U'veirachta

We ate when we were hungry
And now we're satisfied
We thank the Source of Blessing
For all that S/He provides

All the hands that have made this meal possible

A TEACHER FROM BERKELEY TOLD ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN HER STUDENTS WASHED AND TRIMMED AND CUT UP INGREDIENTS AND MADE A BIG SALAD. 'NOW WAIT,' SHE SAID, 'BEFORE WE START EATING, LET'S STOP AND THINK ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO TILLED THE GROUND, PLANTED THE SEEDS, AND HARVESTED THE VEGETABLES.'

THE KIDS STOOD UP AT THEIR DESKS AND GAVE THE SALAD A STANDING OVATION."

– Frances Moore Lappé

The breath of life

"THE BREATH OF LIFE" ... OF COURSE THAT IS GOD'S NAME. WE BREATHE, AND THE TREES BREATHE. WE BREATHE IN WHAT THE TREES BREATHE OUT. SO WE BREATHE EACH OTHER INTO EXISTENCE: WE, AND THE GALAXIES, AND THE ARRAYS OF SCIENCE AND THE CODES OF LAW AND THE PLAYS OF MUSIC, WE ARE BREATHING EACH OTHER INTO EXISTENCE. AND THE BREATH, OF COURSE, GOES IN A CYCLE.

—Arthur Waskow, Rainbow Sign

Nature & Civilization

WE SAY 'BLESSED BE THOU, O ETERNAL OUR GOD, RULER OF THE UNIVERSE, WHO BRINGS FORTH BREAD FROM THE EARTH.' EMPIRICALLY SPEAKING, WOULD IT NOT BE MORE CORRECT TO GIVE CREDIT TO THE FARMER, THE MERCHANT AND THE BAKER? [RATHER] WE BLESS GOD WHO MAKES POSSIBLE BOTH NATURE AND CIVILIZATION.

– Abraham Joshua Heschel, God in Search of Man

Songs

Adamah

Adamah v'shamayim
chom ha-esh,
tzlil ha-mayim

Ani margish zot be-gufi
ruchi ve-nishmati

Love the earth, love the sky
Heat of fire,
drop of water

I can feel it in my body
In my spirit and in my soul

The Ocean

There is so much magnificence
in the ocean
Waves are coming in,
waves are coming in.
Halleluyah...

Sanctuary

Oh lord prepare me
To be a sanctuary
Pure and holy
Tried and true

And with thanksgiving
I'll be a living
Sanctuary
For you

Silent Reflection and Call To Action

Master of the Universe, grant me the ability to be alone;
May it be my custom to go outdoors each day
Among the trees and grass--among all growing things
And there may I be alone and enter into prayer,
To talk with the One to whom I belong.
May I express there everything in my heart.
And may all the foliage of the field, all grasses trees and plants
Awake at my coming, to send the powers of their life into
the words of my prayer
So that my prayer and speech are made whole
Through the life and spirit of all growing things,
Which are made as one by their transcendent Source.
May I then pour out the words of my heart
Before your Presence like water, O God,
And lift up my hands to You in worship, on my behalf, and
that of my children!

- Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav

Song of the Grasses

דע לך שכל רועה ורועה יש לו ניגון מיוחד משלו דע לך שכל עשב ועשב יש לו שירה מיוחדת משלו ומשירת העשבים נעשה ניגון של רועה	<i>da' lekha she-kol ro'eh ve-ro'eh yesh lo nigun meyuchad mishelo da' lekha she-kol 'esev ve'esev yesh lo shira meyuchedet mishelo u-mi-shirat ha'asavim na'aseh nigun shel ro'eh</i>	Know for yourself that each & every shepherd Has a tune that is special to him Know for yourself that each and every grass Has a song that is special to it And from the song of the grasses Is made the tune of the shepherd
כמה יפה כמה יפה ונאה כששומעים השירה שלהם טוב מאד להתפלל ביניהם ובשמחה לעבוד את ה' ומשירת העשבים מתמלא הלב ומשתוקק	<i>kamah yafeh kamah yafeh ve-na'eh ke-she-shom'im ha-shira she-lahem tov me'od le-hitpalel beineihem u-ve-simcha la'avod et Hashem u-mi-shirat ha'asavim mitmale' ha-lev u-mishtoqeq</i>	How nice, how nice and pleasant That when one hears their song It is very good to pray among them And with happiness to worship God And from the song of the grasses The heart is filled and yearns
וכשהלב מן השירה מתמלא אל ארץ ישראל ומשתוקק אור גדול אזי נמשך ועולה מקדושתה של הארץ עליו ומשירת העשבים נעשה ניגון של הלב	<i>u-khe-she-ha-lev min ha-shira mitmale' 'el 'eretz yisra'el u-mishtoqeq 'or gadol aze nimshakh ve'oleh mi-qedushata shel ha'aretz 'alav u-mi-shirat ha'asavim na'aseh nigun shel ha-lev</i>	And when from the song the heart is filled And yearns towards the land of Israel A great light then continues and grows From the holiness of the land upon it And from the song of the grasses Is made the tune of the heart

— Naomi Shmer, based on the writings of R'Nachman of Breslav, “Likutei Sichot”

More Learning

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch

Chapter 50 סימן נ

Berachos Said Before Enjoying **פְּלִיִּים בְּבִרְכָּה רֵאשׁוֹנָה**
Food, Drinks, and Fragrances **מִבְּרֵיַת הַהֶהָרִיץ**

1) It is written, **א) כְּתִיב,**
“The earth is *Hashem*’s and the fullness thereof.”¹ **לְה’ הָאָרֶץ וּמְלוֹאָהּ,**
[which implies]
that everything is like consecrated matter. **שֶׁהַפֶּל הוּא כְּמוֹ הַקֹּדֶשׁ,**
And just as it is forbidden **וְכִמוֹ שְׁאֵסוּר**
to derive benefit from sacred things **לְהִנּוֹת מִן הַהֶקְדָּשׁ**
before they are redeemed, **עַד לְאַחַר הַפְּדִיּוֹן**
and anyone who derives benefit from sacred things **וְהִנְהִיגָה מִן הַהֶקְדָּשׁ**
without prior redemption **בְּלֹא פְּדִיּוֹן**
is guilty of misusing sacred property, **מֵעַל,**
so it is forbidden **כְּמוֹ כֵּן אֵסוּר**
to derive pleasure from this world **לְהִנּוֹת מִן הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה**
without [first reciting] a berachah, **בְּלֹא בְּרָכָה,**
and the berachah constitutes the redemption. **וְהַבְּרָכָה הִיא הַפְּדִיּוֹן.**
If you experience pleasure **וְהִנְהִיגָה**
and [before you did] you failed to recite a berachah, **בְּלֹא בְּרָכָה,**
it is as though you misused something **כְּאֵלּוֹ מֵעַל**
that is sacred to *Hashem*, blessed be His Name. **בְּקֹדֶשׁ ה’ יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ.**
There is no minimum quantity of food **וְאֵין שְׁעוֹר**
over which the first berachah must be said, **לְבִרְכָּה רֵאשׁוֹנָה,**
for if you eat or drink **שֶׁאִפְּלוּ אוֹכֵל אוֹ שׁוֹתָה**
even the smallest quantity, **כָּל-שֶׁהוּא,**
you must recite the first berachah. **חַיֵּב לְבָרֵךְ בְּרָכָה רֵאשׁוֹנָה.**

Therefore,
 if you wish to eat [a portion of] a large fruit
 [which you must] cut up into small pieces,
 then you should recite the berachah
 while the fruit is [still] whole,
 for it is considered an [enhancement of] a *mitzvah*
 to say a berachah over something that is whole;
 and the pause [caused by cutting up the fruit]
 is not considered an interruption,
 because [this cutting]
 is necessary in order to eat [the fruit].

וְלִבְנֵי
 בְּשֵׁרוּצָה לְאֹכֹל פְּרִי גָדוֹל
 וְלִחְתוּךְ מִמֶּנּוּ חֲתִיכוֹת,
 יְבָרֵךְ
 בְּשֵׁהפְרִי שְׁלֵם,
 מִשּׁוּם דְּמִצְוָה
 לְבָרֵךְ עַל הַשְּׁלֵם,
 וְהִשְׁהִיָּה
 לֹא הוּי הַפְּסֵק,
 מִשּׁוּם
 שֶׁהֵיא לְצֻרְךָ הַנְּאֻכָּלָה.

8) If you eat or drink something
 for medicinal purposes,
 if it is something tasteful
 and you enjoy it,
 you should recite before and after [taking it]
 the appropriate berachah,
 even if it consists of forbidden food.
 Since the Torah permits you,⁸
 under the present circumstances, [to take it],
 you should say the berachah over it.

ח (ה) הָאוֹכֵל אוֹ שׁוֹתֵה
 לְרְפוּאָה,
 אִם הוּא דָּבָר מְטֻעֵם
 וְנִהְיָה מִמֶּנּוּ,
 מְבָרֵךְ עֲלָיו לְפָנָיו וְאַחֲרָיו
 בְּרִכָּה הַרְאוּיָה לוֹ,
 נְאֻפְלוֹ הוּא דְּבָר אָסוּר,
 כִּינֵן שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה הַתִּיבָה לוֹ
 עֲתָה,
 צָרִיךְ הוּא לְבָרֵךְ עֲלָיו.
 וְאִם הוּא דָּבָר מַר
 שְׂאִינוֹ נִהְיָה מִמֶּנּוּ,
 אִינוֹ מְבָרֵךְ עֲלָיו.
 הַשּׁוֹתֵה בִּיצָה חִיָּה
 לְצַחֲצַח קוּלוֹ,
 אִף שְׂאִינוֹ נִהְיָה מִשְׁעֻמָּה,
 נִהְיָה הוּא מִמְּזוּנָה, דְּמִינֵן זֵינֵן,
 וּמְבָרֵךְ עֲלֶיהָ.

However, if it has a bitter flavor
 and is distasteful to you,
 then do not say the berachah over it.

If you drink a raw egg
 in order to make your voice clear,
 although you do not enjoy the taste,
 you do enjoy the nourishment, it provides;
 and you should recite the berachah over it.

More Learning

Food For Thought

Use the following texts for discussions around your seder table.

Grow your own

One who purchases grain in the market—to what may such a person be likened? To an infant whose mother died, and they pass him from door to door among wetnurses and (still) the baby is not satisfied. One who buys bread in the marketplace—to what may such a person be likened? It is as if he is dead and buried. But one who eats from his own (what one has grown himself) is like an infant raised at his mother's breasts.

He used to say: During the time that a person eats from what he has grown himself—his mind is tranquil. Even one who eats from that which his father has grown or from that of his mother's or son's, his mind is not tranquil—and you do not [even] need to say [food grown] from that of others [non-relatives].

– Avot de Rabbi Natan 31:1

What is the text saying? What might be modern-day equivalents of the three categories?

Why do you think it uses such visceral language? And why do you think the author or transmitters of this text made these arguments?

Planting Trees

During the planting of the President's Forest in 1949, Prime Minister David Ben Gurion said:

"Of all the blessed acts in which we are engaged in this country, I do not know if there is a more fruitful enterprise, whose results are so useful, as the planting of trees, which adds beauty to the scenery of our country, improves its climate and adds health to its inhabitants."

It was no coincidence that the 15th of Shvat - the day which symbolizes the revival of nature, as highlighted by the flowering of the almond trees, and of the renewed ties between the Jewish people and its land - was chosen by various institutions as their inauguration day:

The cornerstone of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem was laid in 1918; the Technion in Haifa in 1925; The Knesset - the Parliament of Israel in 1949.

רַבִּי אַחַאי בֶּן יֵאֲשִׁיָּה אָמַר: הַלּוֹקֵחַ תְּבוּאָה מִן הַשּׁוּק, לָמָּה הוּא דוֹמָה? לְתִינוּק שְׂמֵתָה אָמוֹ וּמַחְזִירִין אוֹתוֹ עַל פְּתָחַי מִיְּנִיקוֹת אַחֲרוֹת וְאֵינוּ שָׁבַע. הַלּוֹקֵחַ פֶּת מִן הַשּׁוּק, לָמָּה הוּא דוֹמָה? בְּאֵלוֹ חֶפְזוֹ וְקִבּוּר. הָאוֹכֵל מִשְׁלוֹ דוֹמָה לְתִינוּק הַמֵּתְגַדֵּל עַל שְׂדֵי אָמוֹ:

הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: בְּזִמְן שְׂאָדָם אוֹכֵל מִשְׁלוֹ, דַּעְתּוֹ מְיוֹשֶׁבֶת עָלָיו. וְאִפְּלוֹ אוֹכֵל אָדָם מִשְׁלֵ אָבִיו וּמִשְׁלֵ אָמוֹ וּמִשְׁלֵ בְּנָיו, אֵין דַּעְתּוֹ מְיוֹשֶׁבֶת עָלָיו וְאֵין צְרִיךְ לוֹמַר מִשְׁלֵ אַחֲרִים.

Blackberries from Vancouver

I went home last fall for Rosh Hashana. Most of the blackberries were gone by then but we went out to the Bird Sanctuary in the Fraser Delta and there were a few still clinging to the vines. I lagged behind the others, picking and eating every remaining berry I could find. It's more than the fact that they are tasty. I love that they are free! And there is no effort involved in getting them from the plant to my mouth, save my picking them. Blackberries grow everywhere in Vancouver, they're almost a weed. Blackberries make me think of home, and my childhood: I remember picking them in elementary school, eating them and putting some in my pocket for later, very much ruining my dress. Living on the East Coast, I miss the blackberries. Last fall I decided I would go back earlier in the season—if only for a day—I would pick as many as I could and fly them back to New York with me.

Oddly enough, that's exactly what I did. A year later it turned out there was a family simcha in early September; I flew home for the weekend. I didn't know if there would still be berries, but I was hopeful. After my father's conversion ceremony Friday afternoon, we went back to

the lot behind the synagogue—a huge wall of untouched, huge, plump berries. If Moses' scouts had seen this when checking out the land... they would have needed two poles to hoist the berries between them and carry them home, that's how big they were. I put my brother and his girlfriend and my father to work. We picked all afternoon, bucketfuls. I couldn't get over it: blackberries, first of all, are delicious. And good for you. And they are free real food that covers the city of Vancouver (and much of the Pacific Northwest) at the tail end of summer. They are tied up in my head with memories of hiking, and camping, and romping outside when its still warm out, fleece jackets and sunsets over the ocean. And they're ubiquitous, so it didn't feel like we were "foraging" – which has a ring of eco-tourism to me. It wasn't anything, except picking blackberries.

We picked about 20 cups of blackberries. I made jam the next night, and flew home the following day. I gave the little jars to many of my friends. A little piece of home, spreadable on toast.

By Anna Stevenson

More Learning

Tu B'Shvat: The People and the Book: Deeper Roots, Wider Branches

Nigel Savage, February 2004, The Jerusalem Report

You can trace the recent history of Tu B'Shvat seders like branches on a tree. The first one I went to, in London in 1986, was hosted by Bonna Haberman and Shmuel Browns, mentors to me and many others in the renewal of Jewish ritual. I made my own seder the following Tu B'Shvat, and I've made or attended one every year since. Seders, like trees, grow branches, and the branches sprout fruit in all directions.

The roots of Tu B'Shvat stretch back to the beginnings of organized Jewish life. We learn from the Mishnah (Tractate Rosh Hashanah) that "the New Year of the Trees" divided the tithing of one year's crop from the next -- the end and start of the tax year, so to speak. After the expulsion from the Land of Israel, Tu B'Shvat went underground, like a seed, ungerminated, lying beneath the soil of Jewish thought and life.

The expulsion from Spain in 1492 scattered Jews in many directions, and some landed in Safed. Like a forest fire that cracks open seeds dormant for decades, Safed's kabbalists rediscovered Tu B'Shvat, and began a period of mystical celebration of the festival. The idea and structure of Tu B'Shvat seders traces back to them.

Among early Zionists, Tu B'Shvat became the day to celebrate their reconnection to the land. As a kid in Manchester, I got JNF tree certificates at Tu B'Shvat and Israeli schoolkids to this day celebrate it by planting trees.

The fourth phase of Tu B'Shvat flowering was pollinated by the first Earth Day in 1970 and

by growing alarm at the degradation of the planet's resources. Its ground was fertilized by the countercultural havurah movement, and the beginnings of an upsurge in Jewish renewal and creativity.

Each of us can draw upon these roots to sprout our own branches and seeds and fruits.

The origins of Tu B'Shvat remind us that we are the descendants of an indigenous people, heirs to an ancient wisdom whose echoes can inform our choices today on subjects like how to eat in a manner that is healthy for us and sustainable for the whole planet, or how to rest in a 24/7 world.

The kabbalist Tu B'Shvat of Tzefat encourages us to open ourselves to mystery, wonder, creativity and celebration; this is an oral wisdom, something learned from others, rather than from books. Nomi Shemer's beautiful contemporary song, "Da Lekha," is based on a Reb Nachman story about angels encouraging each blade of grass simply to grow. The spreading in many parts of the Jewish world of drums, yoga and meditation is part of this phenomenon. So too is the way that "Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu," written originally by the Israeli band Sheva, has erupted as this generation's anthem. The peaceful and the joyous in Jewish life are being rediscovered. Tu B'Shvat is a moment to celebrate new life and new beginnings, physical and cultural.

The Zionists' Tu B'Shvat prompts us to think afresh about the assumption that the era when Jews were connected physically to

the Land is over, with Israel now a country of venture capitalists and MBAs. Kibbutzim like Lotan and Keturah, among others, are renewing that connection with the land, and although agriculture is shrinking, there is growing awareness of the need to preserve the environment. Kosher organic farms have sprouted in Massachusetts, Vermont and Connecticut, and there is a deepening move at the fringes of American Jewish life toward reconnecting with the land in a variety of ways. Tu B'Shvat is a fine time to think about creating a community garden at your synagogue -- or exploring Israel on a bike or by foot rather than by car.

Tu B'Shvat today is like a bonsai tree that helps us see in miniature the broader shape of contemporary Jewish renewal. It is one of the clearest examples of the rebirth of rooted Jewish life after the Shoah. The charred site of a forest fire slowly gives birth to new growth, and 40 or 50 years later a new forest stands in its place. Each of the elements of that forest grew literally from seeds that survived the fire; yet the forest itself has its own unique characteristics. Today's Tu B'Shvat seders grow organically from more than 2,000 years of Jewish tradition, yet the vital elements of them are new and reflect the world we live in. The encounter of postmodern urban life with contemporary environmental challenge is renewing Jewish life in unanticipated ways. It is an opportunity to deepen our roots, and to branch out afresh to engage the world.





Our vision is to create
a healthier and more sustainable Jewish community
and a healthier and more sustainable world.

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www.hazon.org

Jewish Environmental Bike Rides



California Ride
May 7-10



**Arava Institute Hazon
Israel Ride**
October 19-26



New York Ride
September 3-6

The New Jewish Food Movement



**Community
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**Jewish Food
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