

Welcome to the Tu biShevat Seder!

Quick Facts on...

Waste

- Americans toss out enough paper and plastic cups, forks, and spoons every year to circle the equator 300 times.
- Nearly 44 million American workers purchase or eat lunch out every weekday.
- America is 5% of the world's population, yet it consumes 1/3 of the earth's timber and paper.

Pesticides

- Most Americans have traces of half a dozen pesticides in their bodies.
- Number of active ingredients in pesticides found to cause cancer in animals or humans: 107; of those active ingredients, the number still in use today: 83

Food Transport

- Produce arriving by truck traveled an average distance of 1,518 miles to reach Chicago in 1998, a 22% increase over the 1,245 miles traveled in 1981.
- Nine percent of America's total energy consumption is used to produce, process, and transport our food.

Intensive Animal Farming

- Animal wastes are responsible for about 16 percent of common water quality problems traceable to household consumption.
- Animal waste generates some 2 billion tons of wet manure a year, over ten times the amount of municipal solid waste generated.

Tu biShevat, the new year of the trees, is a time to think about our relationship to the world, and our responsibility to take care of it. The Tu biShevat Seder was originally designed by the kabbalists of 16th century Tzfat. The four parts of the seder symbolize the four mystical worlds of creation: *Atzilut* (emanation), *Beriah* (creation), *Yetzirah* (formation), and *Assiyah* (action), alluded to in the verse: "All that is called in My Name, for My Glory, I have created it, I have formed it, and I have made it." (Isaiah 43:7)

Every time we eat food, we are obligated to say a blessing thanking Hashem for creating it. The differences between the blessings also help us understand WHERE our food comes from. For example, the blessings over fruit, vegetables, and bread remind us to think about trees [*borei peri ha-eitz*], earth [*borei peri ha-adamah*], and tilling the land [*ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz*].

At one time in our history, all people could see their food being grown and tilled by hand. But in modern life we rarely see where our food comes from. Our distance from the production of food blinds us to the dangers of modern agriculture: pollution from pesticides, chemical fertilizers, transportation, and animal waste, which damage the air we breathe and the water we drink. In this seder, we will explore where our food comes from and some ways that we can eat food that is better for ourselves and for the world.

It is not always easy to do the right thing, even for people who are committed to doing so. For this seder, we researched ways to get more environmentally-friendly food for dinner, but we were not able to provide that food because of logistical concerns. It is the Jewish way to do the best we can with the resources that we have. In this seder, we will suggest some actions that are easy and some actions that are more difficult. We encourage you to take advantage of your own resources and ingenuity to take the actions that you can. If necessary, take small steps, but keep growing – *ma'alim ba-kodesh ve-ein moridin* – we must go up in holiness, not go down. (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 21b)

Food:

Blessings and Responsibility A Tu b'Shevat Seder



(Put this on your fridge!)

Resources for further action:

- Kosher organic products:
www.orgfood.com
- Kosher organic poultry, available in MD and VA:
<http://www.wisekosher.com/>
- Sustainable seafood, Monterey Bay Aquarium:
www.mbayaq.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp
- Enviro-friendly disposable goods:
www.treecycle.com
- Enviro-friendly cleaning supplies:
www.gaiam.com
- DC Local Farmer Markets:
www.freshfarmermarket.org
- Practical steps for using your consumer and investor power for social change:
www.coopamerica.org
- Green pages with over 2,000 green companies:
www.care2.greenpages.org
- Quick video on the effects of meat farming:
www.thematrix.com
- 18 things you can buy to make a difference:
www.newdream.org

Learn more about Torah and the Environment!

www.canfeinesharim.org

This seder was created and piloted by the Kasher Israel "Green Group" in Washington, DC.

Second World: Our Responsibility to the Earth

And the Lord G-d took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to guard it. Genesis 2:15

“When you enter the land you shall plant” (Leviticus 19:23) – Just as you came and found trees planted by others, so you must plant for your children. Tanchuma, Kedoshim

The world of Yetzirah, Formation, symbolizes spring. When Hashem created the world, He gave us the responsibility for creating its final form: tilling the land and protecting it. He also gave us rules for taking care of each other in using the land. The world of Yetzirah reminds us of our obligations to the land we’ve been given.

Fruits with inedible cores: olives, dates, persimmons, peaches (list what we have)

White wine with a drop of red symbolizes spring, the planting season.

Make a commitment to buy more organic foods. Organic foods are gentler to the land, and safer for farmers and consumers (i.e., you). Non-organic produce whose outer layer is edible retains pesticides and fertilizers.

Third World: The Good in Everything

The Earth, and everything in it, is Hashem’s. Psalms 24:1

Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai said: Three things are equal in importance, earth [adamah], humanity [adam], and rain. Rabbi Levi bar Chiyata said: Each one is three letters, to teach that without earth there would be no rain and without rain earth could not endure; while without either man could not exist. Genesis Rabbah 13:3

The world of Beriah, Creation, symbolizes summer. This is the world that reminds us that Hashem created the world, and it is infused with holiness. In this world, the fruits are fully edible. We sense the good in everything, and we recognize the interconnectedness of the world. We work to support each other and our communities.

Fruits that are entirely edible: grapes, figs, apples, pears, berries, carobs, etc.

Red and white wine mixed symbolizes summer, a time of growth and full bloom.

Make a commitment to buy locally-grown food, available at farmers’ markets or Whole Foods. This reduces pollution from transport, and supports local farmers, who provide us with higher-quality, fresher produce – entirely edible.

First World: Breaking Down Barriers

Take care not to harm or desolate the world, for if you destroy it, there will be no one to repair it after you. Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:20

This is the way of the pious... they will not waste even a mustard seed, and they are distressed at every ruination and spoilage they see. Sefer haChinuch, mitzvah 529

The world of Assiyah, Action, symbolizes winter. In this world we face the hard shells that keep us separate from one another and the world. It can be a challenge to open up and make changes to protect each other and the planet. The world of Assiyah reminds us that we need to take action even when we face obstacles.

Fruits with inedible shells: pomegranates, nuts, etc. (list what we have available)

White wine represents winter’s potential – our buried potential for action.

Make a commitment to not to use paper goods (or to reduce your use and use more eco-friendly paper goods) at your Shabbos and Yom Tov meals. Use cloth napkins instead of paper. Store food in reusable containers rather than disposable plastic bags. These changes will also enhance *kevod Shabbat*. The hard shells of the Assiyah fruits symbolize waste.

Fourth World: Sustainability

And Yehudah and Yisrael dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree... I Kings 5:5

Rabbi Akiva said: Any city which has no fruit in it, no Torah scholar is permitted to live in it, because the varieties of fruit open the eyes. Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 17b

The world of Atzilut, Emanation, symbolizes fall. The harvest season is the season of gratitude. We have a sense of fulfillment when we see the bounty that has come from all our efforts. Ultimately, the results of our efforts to protect the planet will yield a world of abundance and fulfillment for our children and grandchildren.

No fruits are eaten, because sustainability is an ideal that we can’t taste yet. Instead, we **smell fragrant spices**, reminding us of all the beauty our world has to offer.

Red wine symbolizes autumn’s fullness and joy.

Make a commitment to buy food that contributes to sustainability: choose sustainable fish, and avoid factory-farmed beef and chicken. Try to reduce your consumption of red meat. Show your appreciation for the natural world by refraining from foods which harm it.