Learning and Discussion Sheet
The “Fruits” of our Labor

1. Bereshit (Genesis) 1:11-12: And G-d said, let the earth bring forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed, after its kind, and fruit tree after its kind, whose seed was in itself, after its kind; and G-d saw that it was good.

2. Rash"i on Bereshit (Genesis) 1:11: "Fruit-tree" That the taste of the tree (will be) like the taste of (it's) fruit. But it (the earth) did not do so, rather (the verse says) "and the earth brought forth…trees yielding fruit", but the tree was not (itself like the taste of the) fruit. Therefore, when Adam was cursed for his sin, also she (the earth) was cursed for her sin, and was cursed.

3. Orot haTeshuvah 6:7- Rav Avraham Isaac Kook

7. At the inception of creation it was intended that the tree have the same taste as the fruit (Genesis Rabbah 5:9). All the supportive actions that sustain any general worthwhile spiritual goal should by right be experienced in the soul with the same feeling of elation and delight as the goal itself is experienced when we envision it. But earthly existence, the instability of life, the weariness of the spirit when confined in a corporate frame, brought it about that only the fruition of the final step, which embodies the primary ideal, is experienced in its pleasure and splendor. The trees that bear the fruit, with all of the necessity for the growth of the fruit have, however, become coarse matter and have lost their taste. This is the failing of the "earth," because of which it was cursed when Adam was also cursed for his sin. But every defect is destined to be mended. Thus we are assured that the day will come when creation will return to its original state, when the taste of the tree will be the same as the taste of the fruit. The earth will "repent" of its "sin" and the way of the practical life will no longer obstruct the delight of the ideal, which is sustained by appropriate intermediate steps on its way toward realization, and will stimulate its emergence from potentiality to actuality.
Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 23a: One day he [Honi the Circle Drawer] was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree; he asked him, How long does it take [for this tree] to bear fruit? The man replied: Seventy years. He then further asked him: Are you certain that you will live another seventy years? The man replied: I found [ready grown] carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted these for me so I too plant these for my children.

Honi sat down to have a meal and sleep overcame him. As he slept a rocky formation enclosed upon him which hid him from sight and he continued to sleep for seventy years. When he awoke he saw a man gathering the fruit of the carob tree and he asked him, Are you the man who planted the tree? The man replied: I am his grandson. Thereupon he exclaimed: It is clear that I slept for seventy years.

**Discussion questions:**

1. Think about times in your life when the process of getting to a result was very difficult. When the process is more challenging, do you find the result more satisfying?
2. The sages seem to imply that it was not meant to be that way; that the “tree bark” or the work put in should be as satisfying as the fruit. What would this be like? Do you think this is possible?
3. What things have you been putting off because the fruits of your labor, while important, will take a very long time to achieve?
4. What environmental actions might you take on if you were willing to have the patience of Honi?

*Compiled by Rabbi Daniel Brown*

**Sources for Translations:**

All entries listed are for English sources in print; all other translations were provided to, or produced by the compiler of this source sheet.