

קיצור סדר ט"ו בשבט

A Short
Seder for Tu BiShvat

celebrating the New Year of the Trees



God led Adam around the Garden of Eden and said,
“Look at My works. See how beautiful they are, how excellent!
For your sake I created them all.
See to it that you do not spoil or destroy My world —
for if you do, there will be no one
to repair it after you.”

—Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13

On the full moon of the month of Shvat
we celebrate the New Year of the Trees
by holding a Tu BiShvat Seder.

Torah teaches us that new trees should not be harvested for three years;
the fruit of a four-year-old tree should be set aside as a gift to God;
and the fruit of a five-year-old tree may be eaten.

But how do we know
when a tree's birthday might be?
Tu BiShvat is the birthday of every tree.

Jewish tradition teaches that on this day,
the sap begins to rise
and trees begin to nourish themselves for the new year.

Trees

Winter is still with us. Nature seems asleep.
The trees stand with black and brown branches
against the pale winter sky.
In the land of Israel
spring is almost here.
Flowers begin to dot the fields,
almond trees begin to blossom.
Heavy winter rains are over,
gentler showers fall;
sap begins to rise in trees.

*Jews there and here and everywhere
celebrate Tu BiShvat, a new year for trees.*

On Tu BiShvat our ancestors
looked forward to the pink flowers of spring,
the red and yellow fruit of summer,
when they would bring gifts to the Temple
and provide for the poor.

*We too rejoice at the renewal of life,
and thank God for the blessings of branch and bud.*

Hineh Mah Tov

*Hineh mah tov u-manaim
shevet achim gam yachad!*

(How good and how pleasant it is
To be in community together.)

הנה מה טוב ומה-נעים
שבת אחים גם יחד!



Journey Through Four Worlds

Kabbalah teaches that we live in four worlds, all at the same time:

the world of our **actions** / *assiyah*

the world of our **emotions** / *yetzirah*

the world of our **thoughts** / *briyah*

and the world of our **spirits**. / *atzilut*

Today we'll move through these four worlds, eating and drinking special fruits and juices as we go. Here's the first stop on our journey:

1. The Physical World / Fruits with Shells

In winter we insulate ourselves with clothing, just as the earth is insulated by snow. The first fruits we eat on our journey symbolize winter; they have hard shells, like us when we dress for the cold. These fruits represent the world of *assiyah*, action.

Some of these fruits have special symbolism in Jewish tradition: like the walnut. Rabbi Tarfon said the Jewish people were like pile of walnuts. If one walnut is removed, every walnut in the pile will be shaken. And when a single Jew is shaken, every other Jew is affected. In the same way, when a single species is endangered, the whole ecosystem is affected.

Before drinking white grape juice we say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei pri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of all being, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Before eating fruits with shells (walnuts, coconuts, bananas, etc) we say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei pri ha'etz.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of all being, creator of the fruit of the tree.

2. The Emotional World / Fruits with Pits

Next we eat fruits which have no protective shells, but which have a hard stone inside. Eating these fruits connects us with springtime. In spring, we will lose our protective clothes and let the sun shine on us! But these fruits contain pits, reminding us that we may still need to protect some emotional part of ourselves deep inside.

Now we are in the world of *yetzirah*, emotions.

Many of these fruits have special significance in Jewish tradition too: like the olive. The olive tree is a sign of hope that, even after great disaster, life can be restored. When the great flood began to subside, Noah sent out a dove. "The dove came back to him toward evening, and there in its bill was a leaf it had picked from an olive tree." (Genesis 8:11).

Before drinking white grape juice with a splash of red in it, we say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei pri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of all being, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Before eating fruits with seeds or pits (olives, dates, apricots, etc) we say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei pri ha'etz.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of all being, creator of the fruit of the tree.

A Teaching From Chief Si'ahl

Teach your children
what we have taught our children —
that the earth is our mother.

Whatever befalls the earth
befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.
If men spit upon the ground,
they spit upon themselves.

This we know.
The earth does not belong to us;
we belong to the earth.

This we know.
All things are connected
like the blood which unites one family.

All things are connected.
Whatever befalls the earth
befalls her sons and daughters.

We did not weave the web of life.
We are merely a small strand in it.

Chief Si'ahl was a Dkhw'Duw'Absh (Duwamish) Native American tribal chief. The modern city of Seattle was named after him.

3. The World of Thought / Soft fruits

Now we bless and eat soft fruits, remembering the warmth of summer. We remember what it feels like to be warm and happy, letting our minds drift, relaxing in the sun.

Now we are in the world of *briyah*, thoughts.

Some of these fruits have special significance in Jewish tradition too: like the fig. The fig symbolizes peace. The rabbis asked, “Why were the words of Torah compared to the fig tree?” They answered, “Since all the figs do not ripen at the same time, the more one searches the tree, the more figs one finds in it.” So it is with the words of Torah – the more we study them, the more sweet morsels we find.

Before drinking red grape juice with a splash of white in it, we say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei pri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of all being, creator of the fruit of the vine.

*Before eating fruits which are soft all the way through
(figs, strawberries, raspberries, etc) we say:*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei pri ha'etz.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of all being, creator of the fruit of the tree.

A Teaching From Talmud

A Talmudic story is told about Honi, who saw an old man planting a carob tree with the help of his grandchild. Honi laughed. "Foolish man," he said, "do you think you will still be alive to eat the fruit of this tree?" The old man replied, "I found trees in the world when I was born. My grandparents planted them for me. So, too, I am planting for my grandchildren."



4. The World of Spirit / No Fruits At All

We have eaten fruits with hard shells, fruits with hard insides, and fruits which are soft all the way through. Now we are entering the world of *atzilut*, spirit. No fruit can truly represent this world.

In this spiritual world, we become most aware of love, which we feel with our hearts, not our senses. Our hearts are full and we praise the Source Who renews all creation.

In Jewish tradition, Tu BiShvat is the day when sap begins to rise to nourish the trees for the year to come. Here where we live, those who have maple trees may soon begin to tap them to harvest their sap.

The maple sap is the essence of the maple tree...so we will mark this step on our journey by tasting maple syrup, celebrating the trees and the sap which gives them life.

Before drinking red grape juice we say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei pri hagafen.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of all being, creator of the fruit of the vine.

Before tasting maple syrup we say:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָ בְּדַבְּרוֹ.

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech ha'olam shehakol nihiyeh bidvaro.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of all, through whose word all things come into being.

Saying Thanks

Take a moment to think about what we've eaten and what we've learned. Think about where the fruits came from: where they grew, who worked to harvest them and bring them here, all the different people who helped to make this meal happen without even knowing it. And then we'll say thanks by reading together:

The Blessing Over Snacks:

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, source of all being, for trees and for the fruits of trees, for the beauty of the fields and for the good world you have given us. Be gracious, Adonai our God, to Israel Your people, and to Jerusalem and the land which contains it -- and also to the other many inhabitants of this earth, other peoples and other nations, and the many wondrous animals and plants of our various ecosystems. Help us to make Your holy places holy, for You are God Who makes all things good. Blessed are You, Adonai our God, for trees and their fruits!

Adamah v'shamayim (Earth and Heavens)

*Adama Veshamayim,
Chom Ha'esh,
Tzvil hamayim*

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

*Ani margish zot begufi,
beruchi, benishmati.*

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

*Heya, heya, heya, heya
heyah, heyah, heyah, ho (2x)*

Heya, heyah, heyah, heyah
heyah, heyah, heyah, ho (2x)

*Ani margish zot begufi,
beruchi, benishmati.*

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

(Chant by Tony Wrench; translated into Hebrew by Shimon Lev Tahor.)