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TU B'SHVAT
FAMILY SEDER
FOR FAMILIES WITH SCHOOL AGE KIDS
(Adapted from Together, A Child-Parent Kit produced by the Melton Research Center and written by Vicky Kelman)

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We are grateful to the Melton Research Center of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and to Vicky Kelman, Joel Lurie Grishaver, and other educators whose work in the 1970s and 1980s made ours possible. Many ideas in this Family Tu B'Shvat Haggadah echo their earlier work, especially the Ecology Checklist at the end of the seder.

On the night of Tu B'Shvat or the night before, conduct a seder for your family and friends. You can do this as a part of dinner or after dinner. Set the table after dinner with a table cloth and flowers, and bring the following items to the table:

Red and white grape juice.
Fruits with shells or peels, such as oranges, almonds, walnuts pomegranates. Fruits with a hard pit such as olives, dates, apricots, cherries. Fruits we eat whole such as figs or blueberries
Bread

Start by telling this story:

Two men were fighting over a piece of land. Each shouted that the land was his. Finally, to settle their differences, they called for their teacher and agreed to abide by whatever decision she gave them. The teacher listened carefully to the first man, and then to the other. She announced the question she was about to solve: "To whom does the land belong?" The men agreed, "That is the question!" "Since the question concerns the land," the teacher said, "Let's hear what the land has to say." The two men walked the teacher to the disputed land. To the men's surprise, the teacher put her ear to the ground and listened. Nodding her head thoughtfully, she said: "I have listened to the land, and it says it belongs to neither of you." "What!?!?" shouted the men in unison. "The land says that you belong to it," the teacher told them.



We are about to celebrate Tu B'Shvat. It began as an agricultural holiday and was celebrated by mystics in the Middle Ages, but it has now come to be a Jewish earth celebration.

Pour everyone a glass of white grape juice, which symbolizes the sleeping quiet, winter plant world. Say the blessing over drinking grape juice and drink the juice.

Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
Borei Pri Ha'gefen.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגֶּפֶן:

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





Explain the fruits we will eat in this seder.

In this seder we will eat many different kinds of fruits, but we'll divide them into three groups. Some fruits need to be peeled before we eat them: their outer layer isn't good for us to eat. Other fruits have inner cores or pits that we can't eat. A third group are good all the way through; we can eat every bit. Some people think about how those three different groups can be compared to different kinds of people, or different kinds of experiences. What do you think it might mean to us to divide our fruits into these groups?

Serve the orange, walnuts, pomegranate or almonds, which are fruits with shells that we can't eat, and say the blessing over eating fruit, and eat the fruits.

Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
Borei Pri Ha'Etz.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ:

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



Now serve bread and say the blessing over eating bread, and eat that, too.

Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
ha-motzi lehem min ha-aretz.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ:

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





Read the following Torah teaching aloud:

“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but in the seventh year you shall let it rest. Let the needy among your people eat of it and what they leave, let the wild beasts eat. You shall do the same with your vineyards and your olive groves.”

(Exodus 23:10-11)

Ask the following questions:

- What do these verses from the Torah mean?
- What is this text teaching us about the land?
- What ideas can we use in our daily lives that are inspired by this law?



Pour a second cup of juice. This time, fill your cup most of the way with white grape juice, but add a small amount of red grape juice, so that the mixture looks light pink. Now serve the olives, apricots, cherries or dates. These fruits don't have outer skins that must be discarded, but they do have seeds or inner cores that we can't eat.

Recite the blessing over drinking grape juice once more and drink this second cup. Now read the blessing over eating fruit once more and eat the fruits from this second group.



Read this Torah teaching out loud:

“When you besiege a city for a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them. You may eat from them, but you must not cut them down.”

(Deuteronomy 20:19)

Ask the following questions:

- What does this verses from the Torah mean?
- What is this text teaching us about the land?



Go on to read:

“Whoever destroys anything that could be useful to others breaks the law of Bal Tashchit.
[Do not destroy]” (Babylonian Talmud, Kodashim 32a)

This is the law we created, based on the verse from Deuteronomy that we just read, about not cutting down our enemies’ fruit trees in a time of war. Why do you think we extend this teaching in this way? What kinds of things are useful that we should not destroy?



Pour the third cup of juice. This time, use half white juice and half red. Serve figs and berries, fruits that are entirely edible.

Recite the blessing over drinking grape juice once more and drink the third cup. Recite the blessing over eating fruit one more time and eat the third group of fruits.

A favorite verse from the book of Proverbs, often sung when returning the Torah to the ark, describes the Torah in these words:

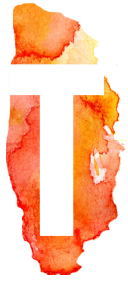
“The Torah is the tree of life to all who hold fast to it and all who support it are happy.”
(Proverbs 3:18)

Discuss these two questions:

- How is the Torah like a tree?
- What do you think it means to say the Torah is like a tree of life?



Pour the fourth cup of juice using mostly the red grape juice with a few drops of white juice. Let each person have more of his or her favorite fruit and serve the second thing made from wheat. Now, for the fourth and last time, read the blessing over drinking grape juice and drink the fourth cup. Then say the blessing over eating fruit for a last time and eat these fruits.



This "Ecology Check List" includes many of the things people do to care for the earth. Read through it and discuss how we as individuals, friends and families can take care of the earth.

First, read through the list and describe how each item takes care of the earth. Next, put a check next to all the things you already do. Finally, put a star next to one more things your family can begin to do as a Tu B'Shvat resolution this year.

- Turn off the water while you brush your teeth**
- Separate your garbage into recycling, composting & true trash**
- Turn off lights when leaving a room**
- Take short showers**
- Use the second side of school papers and memos for scrap paper**
- When hiking and visiting parks, stay on marked trails**
- Keep your home thermostat set at 68 degrees**
- Buy fruit and vegetables from local farmers**
- Travel by bicycle and public transportation whenever possible**
- Eat less red meat**
- Plant trees in your yard or neighborhood**
- Volunteer for an environmental organization**
- Eat organic food**
- Grow some of your own fruits and vegetables**
- Buy printer paper made from 100% post-consumer waste**
- Other**

Conclude your seder by singing "Happy Birthday" to the trees.