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TU B'SHVAT
HAZON'S SEDER
AND SOURCEBOOK

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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.

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.

I don't really understand the mysticism of the masters of Tzfat. 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 Carlbach 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

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 on that date in 1918; the Technion in Haifa in 1925; The Knesset, the Parliament of Israel, in 1949.

Blackberries from Vancouver

I went home last fall for Rosh Hashanah. 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 Hanau**

A Tree of the Field

יט כי-תצוד אל-עיר ימים רבים להלחם עליה לתפשה,
 לא-תשחית את-עצה לנדה עליו גרון--כי ממנו תאכל, ואתו לא תכרת:
 כי האדם עץ השדה, לבא מפניך במצור.
 כ רק עץ אשר-תדע, כי-לא-עץ מאכל הוא--אתו תשחית, וכרת;
 ובנית מצור, על-העיר אשר-הוא עשה עמך מלחמה--עד רדתה. (פ)

In times of war, when you are in a prolonged battle with a city in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees by taking an ax to them. Because you eat from them, and so you cannot cut them down. After all, is a tree in the field a person, who has come before you to fight? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed; you can cut them down for building fortresses against the city that is waging war upon you, until it falls.

- Deuteronomy 20:19-20

Grow your own

Rabbi Achai ben Yoshiah says:

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 wet nurses 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 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?



What is Tu B'Shvat?

Tu B'Shvat (טו בִּשְׁבַט) 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” (טו) 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.



We are a peculiar people, scheduling our nature festival in the dead of winter. But Tu B'Shvat, 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 B'Shvat, 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 B'Shvat a

THE FOUR FACES OF TU B'SHVAT

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

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 B'Shvat 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 B'Shvat was transformed yet again. In a new act of ritual creativity, Jewish schoolteachers of pre-state Palestine made Tu B'Shvat 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 B'Shvat. 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.

Therefore,	ולכן
if you wish to eat [a portion of] a large fruit	בשרוצה לאכול פרי גדול
[which you must] cut up into small pieces,	ולחתך ממנו חתיכות,
then you should recite the berachah	יברך
while the fruit is [still] whole,	בשהפרי שלם,
for it is considered an [enhancement of] a <i>mitzvah</i>	משום דמצוה
to say a berachah over something that is whole;	לברך על השלם,
and the pause [caused by cutting up the fruit]	ונהשהה
is not considered an interruption,	לא הוי הפסק,
because [this cutting]	משום
is necessary in order to eat [the fruit].	שהיא לצורך האכילה.
8) If you eat or drink something	ח האוכל או שותה
for medicinal purposes,	לרפואה,
if it is something tasteful	אם הוא דבר מטעם
and you enjoy it,	ונהנה ממנו,
you should recite before and after [taking it]	מברך עליו ולפניו ולאחריו
the appropriate berachah,	ברכה הראויה לו,
even if it consists of forbidden food.	נאפלו הוא דבר אסור,
Since the Torah permits you, ⁸	פינן שהתורה התירה לו
under the present circumstances, [to take it],	עתה,
you should say the berachah over it.	צריך הוא לברך עליו.
However, if it has a bitter flavor	ואם הוא דבר מר
and is distasteful to you,	שאינו נהנה ממנו,
then do not say the berachah over it.	אינו מברך עליו.
If you drink a raw egg	השותה ביצה תיה
in order to make your voice clear,	לצחצח קולו,
although you do not enjoy the taste,	אף שאינו נהנה מטעמה,
you do enjoy the nourishment, it provides;	נהנה הוא ממזונה, דמיון זיין,
and you should recite the berachah over it.	ומברך עליה.

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch

Chapter 50 סימן נ

Berachos Said Before Enjoying Food, Drinks, and Fragrances **בְּלָלִים בְּבִרְכָה רִאשׁוֹנָה מִבְּרַחַת הַהֶהָרִין**

1) It is written, **אָתָּה ה' הָאֲרֶץ וּמְלֹאָתָהּ,**
 "The earth is Hashem's and the fullness thereof."¹
 [which implies]
 that everything is like consecrated matter. **שֶׁהַכֹּל הוּא כְּמוֹ הַקִּדְשׁ,**
 And just as it is forbidden **וְכִמוֹ שְׂאֵסוּר**
 to derive benefit from sacred things **לְהִנּוֹת מִן הַהִקְדָּשׁ**
 before they are redeemed, **עַד לְאַתֵּר הַפְּדִיּוֹן**
 and anyone who derives benefit from sacred things **וְהִנְהִיגָה מִן הַהִקְדָּשׁ**
 without prior redemption **בְּלֹא פְדִיּוֹן**
 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 בְּרַכָּה,**
 and the berachah constitutes the redemption. **וְהַבְּרַכָּה הִיא הַפְּדִיּוֹן.**
 If you experience pleasure **וְהִנְהִיגָה**
 and [before you did] you failed to recite a berachah, **בְּלֹא בְּרַכָּה,**
 it is as though you misused something **כְּאִלוּ קָעַל**
 that is sacred to Hashem, blessed be His Name. **בְּקִדְשֵׁי ה' יִתְבָּרַךְ שְׁמוֹ.**
 There is no minimum quantity of food **וְאֵין שְׂעוּר**
 over which the first berachah must be said, **לְבִרְכָה רִאשׁוֹנָה,**
 for if you eat or drink **שְׂאֵפְלוֹ אוֹכֵל אוֹ שׁוֹתָהּ**
 even the smallest quantity, **כָּל-שְׂהוּא,**
 you must recite the first berachah. **חִיב לְבָרַךְ בְּרַכָּה רִאשׁוֹנָה.**

The Ecological: We are part of an interconnected, inter-dependent universal web of life. Universalizing this connection leads directly to the latest metamorphosis: Tu B'Shvat 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 B'Shvat, 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 B'Shvat 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 B'Shvat 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.

THE **FOUR WORLDS** OF TU B'SHVAT



	FIRST WORLD	SECOND WORLD	THIRD WORLD	FOURTH WORLD
SPHERE (KABBALAH)	ASSIYAH } ACTION עשיה }	YETZIRAH } FORMATION יצירה }	B'RIYAH } THOUGHT בריאה }	ATZILUT } SPIRIT אצילות }
KAVANAH	GROUNDEDNESS DEFENSE	GROWTH CREATIVITY	OPENNESS ABUNDANCE	MYSTERY WHOLENESS
ELEMENT	EARTH	WATER	AIR	FIRE
SEASON	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL
SYMBOLIC FOODS	Inedible outside, edible inside: orange, banana, walnut, almond, pomegranate	Edible outside, inedible inside: Dates, olives, apricots, plums	Entirely edible: Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries	Only spiritual sustenance
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

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

Blessings of Enjoyment

The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch was written in the 19th century. It is an abridgement of the comprehensive guide on Jewish halakha, the Shulchan Aruch, which was written in the 16th century. The samples on the following pages discuss some of the different blessings said over food.

A Four Fold Song

There are many levels of song. There is one who sings the **song of one's own life**, and in herself she finds everything, full spiritual satisfaction. There is another who sings the **song of his people**. He leaves the circle of his own individual self, because he finds it without sufficient breadth, without an idealistic basis. He aspires toward the heights, and he stretches himself with a gentle love to the whole community of Israel. Together with her he sings her songs. He feels grieved in her afflictions and delights in her hopes. He contemplates noble and pure thoughts about her past and her future, and probes with love and wisdom her inner spiritual essence.

There is another who reaches toward more distant realms, and she goes beyond the boundary of Israel to sing the **song of humanity**. Her spirit extends to the wider vistas of the majesty of humanity in general, and its noble essence, aspiring towards humanity's general goal and looking forward towards its higher perfection. From this source of life she draws the subjects of her meditation and study, her aspirations and her visions.

Then there is one who rises toward wider horizons, until he links himself with all existence, with all God's creatures, with all worlds, and he sings his song with all of them. It is of one such as this that tradition has said that whoever sings a portion of song each day is assured of having a share in the world to come.

And then there is one who rises with all these songs in one ensemble, and they all join their voices. Together they sing their songs with beauty, each one lends vitality and life to the other. They are sounds of joy and gladness, sounds of jubilation and celebration, sounds of ecstasy and holiness.

The song of the self, the song of the people, the song of humanity, the song of the world all merge in her at all times, in every hour. And this full comprehensiveness rises to become the song of holiness, the song of God, the song of Israel, in its full strength and beauty, in its full authenticity and greatness. The name "Israel" stands for shir el the song of God. It is a simple song, a twofold song, a threefold song, and a fourfold song. It is the Song of Songs of Solomon, Shlomo which means peace or wholeness. It is the song of the Highest One in whom is wholeness.

--- Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, from *Orot Hakodesh, Volume II, pp.458-459*

Discussion Questions from the Teva Learning Center:

What does Rav Kook mean by the term 'song'?

What level of 'song' does Rav Kook believe is the ultimate? Is there an ultimate?

Why does it matter which 'song' we sing?

Which 'song' do you sing most in your life? Do you think you should change that?

Why is nature the highest level?

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

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי הגפן:

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

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



SHEHECHIYANU

Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
**Shehecheyanu, vekiyemanu
vehigiyanu lazman hazeh.**

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
שהחיינו וקיימנו לזמן הזה:

FRUIT OF THE TREE

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי העץ:

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

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



FRUIT OF THE EARTH

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

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי האדמה:

Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe,
Who creates fruit of the earth.



HIGHER QUALITY WINE

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
הטוב והמטיב
Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
Hatov ve-ha-Meitiv.

Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe,
Who makes good and better.

God Language

Barukh 'atah Adonai berukha 'at yah nevarekh 'et	בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה בְּרוּכָה אַתָּה יְיָ נְבָרְךָ אֵת	Blessed are you Adonai Blessed are you Yah Let us Bless
Eloheynu he-shekhina ein ha-chayim'	אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַשְּׁכִינָה עֵין הַחַיִּים	Our God The Shekhina Source of Life
melekh ha-'olam chey ha-'olamim ruach ha-'olam	מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם חַי הָעוֹלָמִים רוּחַ הָעוֹלָם	Sovereign of the universe Life of all the universe Spirit of the universe

— Kol Haneshama (Reconstructionist Prayerbook)

Some people have amended the traditional God-language of blessings to reflect their theological outlooks and ethical concerns. The Torah uses many Hebrew names for God, and there are even more ways of translating those names into English words. In this haggadah, all the berakhot texts are given in Hebrew in the traditional formula. But depending on who the guests are at your seder, you may want to explore using alternative language to address God, either in Hebrew or in English. For instance, My Rock, Friend, The Place, Peace, The Name all have bases in our tradition, and some participants who are uncomfortable with the word "God" may be engaged by alternatives. While reciting the blessings in this seder and elsewhere in the liturgy, the following elements can be combined to create alternative formulas.

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*

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...

Ilu Finu

If our mouths were filled
with song as the sea,
our tongues with exultation
as the masses of its waves
Ilu finu
malei shira kayam
u'leshoneinu rina
kahamon galav

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

Additional Songs

Consider singing other songs you may know that express our real or metaphorical relation to trees, plants, or other growing things.
Some examples:

Shirat ha-Asabim (Song of the Grass)
Naomi Shemer

The Garden Song ("Inch by Inch")
David Mallett

Tzadik ka-Tamar Yifrach
(The Righteous Flourish like Palms)

El Ginat Egoz Yaradeti
(I Went Down to the Walnut Grove)

Blessing After the Meal

We bring the act of eating to a conclusion by thanking the One who made our food possible. The full text of the traditional Birkat haMazon, Grace after Meals, can be found in a bentscher or siddur. In a group of three or more people eating together, we begin it by inviting one another to join in blessing God. Below are two shorter forms of blessings that may be used as alternative ways of concluding our meal.

The Talmud cites this Aramaic formula as the most concise possible form of grace after a meal. This is the shortest grace after meals mentioned in the Talmud, written in Aramaic. The couplet below the transliteration is an interpretation that can be sung to the same melody as the Aramaic blessing.

וְאַכַלְתָּ בְּרִיךְ רַחֲמָנָא
וְשָׂבַעְתָּ מַלְכָּא דְעֵלְמָא
וּבְרַכְתָּ מְרִיבָה דְהַאי פִּיתָא

V'achalta Brich rachamana
V'savata Malka de-alma
U'veirachta Ma'arey de-hai pita

And you shall eat Blessed is the Merciful One,
and you shall be satisfied Ruler of the world,
and you shall bless Who created this bread.

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

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

All the hands that have made this meal possible

"A teacher from Berkeley... Tells 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

Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet

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*

I. עשייה • ASSIYAH: 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 יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם עֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית

Baruch attah 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

The first cup we drink at the seder 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, say the blessing together, and then drink only half of the wine or juice in the cup:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן:

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

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 יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם:

Barukh attah 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 יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
הַמּוֹצֵיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ:

Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu melech 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 world of action, 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.



ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי העץ:

Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
Borei Pri Ha'Etz.
 Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe,
creator of fruit of the trees.

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."

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.

Food Meditation

Look closely at the fruit you have chosen. Notice its shape, its colors, its curves and undulations, all of its details... Now smell your fruit. Now consider for a moment all of the people involved in getting this fruit into your hand. Where was it grown, and by whom? Farmers, truck drivers, storekeepers, men and women... imagine how hard they are working to support themselves and their families. Now consider all the ways in which God has supported the creation of this fruit by creating fertile soil, clouds and rainwater, energy from sunshine, air... Finally, think about the tree or plant from which this fruit grew. Think of the tree's roots reaching down into the soil, think of the strong trunk and rough bark, and think of the branches that stretch to the sky. Think of the whole plant, the whole tree.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
שהחיינו וקימנו לזמן הזה:
 Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
**Shehecheyanu, vekiyemanu
 vehigiyanu lazman hazeh.**

Blessed are You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe,
**Who has caused us to live, and has
 sustained us, and has enabled
 us to come to this time.**

IV. אצילות • Atzilut: The World of Emmanation

Fourth Cup of Wine

This cup is the highest level of creation. We see the tree 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.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי הגפן:
 Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha'olam,
Borei Pri Ha'gefen.

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



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

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 and be pure holiness while eating and while grounded in our bodies. However, the fourth 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.

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.

III. **בריאה • B'riyah:** The World of Creation

Third Cup of Wine

This cup of wine or juice 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 humankind 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:



ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי הגפן:

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

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

Third Fruit

Beriyah, 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: blackberry, blueberry, carob, fig, grape, kiwi, kumquat, raspberry, star fruit and strawberry.

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



ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי העץ:

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

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

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? Labor? So, too, when a righteous man perishes from the world, who can make another stand up in his stead except after many years?

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

II. **יצירה • Yetzirah:** The 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:



ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי הגפן:

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

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

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.



ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם
בורא פרי העץ:

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

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

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

Interlude: Acting in the lower worlds, affecting the upper worlds

The kabbalists believed that all ritual and moral actions that we take in this world have an affect on the order of the higher, divine spheres, the worlds beyond our world. We see the same principle in microcosm, when we take local or domestic actions that effect the world around us.

Tu B'Shvat Activity: Eco Bingo

Think about the impact of your small actions on the world around us. Fill out this card by checking off the things you do and leaving the others boxes blank. Take five minutes. Then share with your neighbor or with all the guests around the table what you are already doing and what you might like to try to do in the coming year. You may be inspired or inspire others as you share ways to help create a more sustainable lifestyle.

I buy at least three quarters of my produce from local farmers markets or a CSA box	I grow some of my own fruits and vegetables	I purchase paper towels, toilet paper & napkins made from 100% post-consumer, recycled paper	I replace burnt out light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs at home and at work	I walk, bike or take public transit to get to work or school
I choose organic products for at least half of my food and beverages purchases	I compost all of my food scraps and yard waste	I purchase printer paper made from 100% post-consumer waste	I keep my thermostat set to no less than 76° for cooling, and no more than 68° for heating	I drive a hybrid car or one that runs on bio-fuel (or no car at all)
I always check with the waiter or fish seller about whether my seafood was caught sustainably	I use an irrigation system to water my yard	I celebrate Tu B'Shvat	I only purchase Energy Star rated appliances	I carry a reusable mug, food container and utensils so I do not need to use disposables when I buy food to go
I only buy sustainably raised eggs and poultry	I turn off the water when washing dishes, shaving, and brushing my teeth	I use cloth napkins and hand towels at home instead of paper goods	I keep my hot water turned down to no more than 120°	I carry reusable shopping bags with me to have handy whenever I go shopping
I eat vegetarian or limit my meat consumption to no more than once per week	I have only reduced flow faucets and showerheads in my bathroom(s)	I take myself off junk mail lists and activate online billing and direct deposit	I only use rechargeable batteries and keep a battery charger handy	I purchase only environmentally friendly soaps and cleaning products