



Tu B'Shvat Seder

Researched, collected and prepared by:
Leah D'vorah Davis, Deerfield Beach, Florida.

Distributed by: <http://RabbiShimon.com>

This is an informational document
This is NOT a religious ritual guide.

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

Table of Contents

TU B' SHVAT 2009	3
The History and Meaning behind the seder:.....	3
TEHILLIM - PSALMS OF ASCENT	4
STRUCTURE OF THE SEDER.....	5
THE FIRST WORLD: OLAM HA-ASSIYAH - THE WORLD OF ACTION	9
B'RACHOT/ BLESSINGS:.....	9
First course: Asiah	10
The branch and the tree	10
Walnuts.....	11
Pomegranates - Rimonim	11
THE SECOND WORLD: OLAM HA'YETZIRAH - THE WORLD OF FORMATION	13
Yetizara	13
Olives:	15
Date - Tamar	15
Grapes:.....	15
Figs:.....	15
The Formation of Environmental Ethics	15
THE THIRD WORLD: OLAM HAB'RIYAH - THE WORLD OF CREATION.....	17
Beriah.....	18
Etrog (Oranges may be substituted).....	19
FIG - T'einah	19
Fig Tree and Torah	19
Carob - Charuv	19
THE FOURTH WORLD: OLAM HA'ATZILUT - THE WORLD OF EMANATION	21
REFERENCES:.....	22

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

TU B' SHVAT 2009

"...A Person is a tree of the field..." (Deut. 20:19)

A tree is constantly growing and so must we. A tree produces fruit and so must we. On Tu b'Shvat we must renew personal growth, just as the trees on Tu b'Shvat begin to draw moisture from the earth.

The History and Meaning behind the Seder:

Tu B'Shvat, the New Year for the trees, was designated, following debate in the Talmud, as the time of renewal of budding in the trees. The early winter rains were mostly over, the sap in the trees had risen, and the period of budding was just beginning. The origin of Tu B'Shvat in the Torah was a time for renewal of our commitment to God and to share the yield of the land with the poor. "Every year, you shall set aside a tenth part of the yield, so that you may learn to revere your God forever." (Deuteronomy 14.22-23)

Tu B'Shvat is the New Year for the Trees. As in all other points in the Jewish calendar, Tu B'Shvat offers a unique opportunity for insight into living and personal growth. Throughout the centuries, Kabbalists have used the tree as a metaphor to understand God's relationship to the spiritual and physical worlds. Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, in his 18th century classic *The Way of God*, teaches that the higher spiritual realms are roots that ultimately manifest their influence through branches and leaves in the lower realms.

In the 16th century, the Kabbalists of Tzfat compiled a Tu B'Shvat seder, somewhat similar to the seder for Passover. It involves enjoying the fruits of the tree, particularly those native to the Land of Israel, and discusses philosophical and Kabbalistic concepts associated with the day. Among other things, the seder is a great way to appreciate the bounty that we so often take for granted, and to develop a good and generous eye for the world around us.

The medieval mystical Kabbalists carried Tu B'Shvat a step further. For them, trees were a symbol of humans, as it says: "For a human is like a tree of the field" (Deut. 20:19). In line with their general concern with Tikun Olam -spiritually repairing the world - the Kabbalists regarded eating a variety of fruits on Tu B'Shvat as a way of improving our spiritual selves. They believed that the ritual consumption of the fruits and the nuts, if done with the proper intention (*kavanah*), would cause the sparks of holy light hidden in the fruit to be liberated from their shells and rise up the heavenly ladder to return to their divine source, thereby contributing to the renewal of life for the coming year. For the Kabbalists, trees were symbolic also of *the* tree - the Tree of Life, which carries divine goodness and blessing into the world. To encourage this flow and effect Tikun Olam, the Kabbalists of Ts'fat (16th century) created a Tu B'Shvat seder loosely modeled after the Pesach seder.

On this night we express our joy and thankfulness for the mystery and grandeur of nature, and renew our commitment to be responsible custodians of God's world. Tonight we will crack open some shells of nuts, and like the Kabbalists of the 16th century, release some sparks of holy light.

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

TEHILLIM - PSALMS OF ASCENT

On Tu B'Shvat it is traditional to read from the fifteen Psalms of Ascent (Shire Hama'alot) which include Psalms 120-134. These were recited as the Levites ascended the fifteen steps to the temple. The fifteen Psalms also remind us of the date of the festival - the fifteenth of Sh'vat - Tu B'Shvat.

Blessings (B'rachot): In order to appreciate properly the special in the 'ordinary' around us, Judaism instructs that we reflect on almost every action we take. It is taught that a person who eats something without first saying a blessing is stealing sacred property (*B'rachot 35a*)

We praise You, Adonai our God, Creator of the universe, who continually does the work of creation.	Baruch ata, Adonai Eloheinu, melech ha-olam, o-seh ma-asei b'rei-sheet.
We praise You, Adonai our God, Creator of the universe, whose world is filled with beauty.	Baruch ata, Adonai Eloheinu, melech ha-olam, she-kacha lo b'olamo.

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

STRUCTURE OF THE SEDER

The Tu B'Shvat seder, like the Passover seder, follows a specific order. The seder is divided into four parts, representing the four worlds. As in the Pesach seder, we drink four cups of wine, each cup here changing color to correspond to the changing seasons. Unique to the Tu B'Shvat seder is the ritual consumption of thirty types of fruits and nuts, with special significance for the first three of the four worlds. According to kabbalah, the four worlds are: Assiyah (action - our world of physical reality), Y'tzirah (formation), B'riah (creation), and Atzilut (emanation).

We begin:

Why do we celebrate the New Year for fruit trees on Tu B'Shvat?

Since the Holy Temple was destroyed, the Jewish people could no longer bring the First Fruits (*Bikkurim*) to Jerusalem. On Tu B'Shvat we offer instead the fruit of our lips, to praise God for all the fruit trees in the world.

Tu B'Shvat marks a new period for taking tithes, a portion of which is given to the poor.

Therefore:

When a person is privileged to eat in the presence of God, he must show his appreciation by giving charity to the poor and feeding them, just as God in His bounty feeds him. (Zohar - Parshat Trumah)

At this point it is appropriate to pass around a 'pushka' to collect tzedakah. After the seder, the money should be donated to a worthy cause.

The Mishnah in Tractate Rosh Hashana says that Tu B'Shvat is New Year for the TREE (singular). This reference to a singular tree alludes to The Tree -- the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden.

And God said: 'Let the earth put forth grass, herb-yielding seeds, and fruit trees bearing fruit of its kind.' 'Fruit tree' means the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which put forth blossoms and fruit. 'Bearing fruit' is the tzaddik, the basis of the world. 'Of its kind' means all the human beings who have in them the spirit of holiness, which is the blossom of that tree. This is the covenant of holiness, the covenant of peace -- and the faithful enter into that kind and do not depart from it. The Tzaddik generates, and the tree conceives and brings forth fruit of its kind. (Zohar - Bereishit 33a)

Meditation:

One should intend that he is eating at the celestial table before God, in the Garden of Eden before the Divine Presence. (Raishit Chochma -- Shar HaKedusha)

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

Take a few moments and think deeply about being in the company of God... sitting at His table... experiencing the sublime spiritual pleasure of a relationship with the Creator Himself.

Discussion questions:

A) When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, they were permitted to eat only fruits and vegetables. Only after Noah's Flood did God permit meat. In what ways is it considered spiritually higher to eat meat? And in what ways is it considered spiritually higher to be a vegetarian?

B) There were two trees in the center of the Garden: the Tree of Life (representing Torah and eternal life) and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (representing death and distortion). Another way of expressing this distinction is that the Tree of Life is objective wisdom, while the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is personal experience. Why would Adam and Eve have chosen to eat from the latter, especially since God had explicitly instructed them not to?

A participant says:

Man's very name -- Adam -- is derived from the word Earth, *adama*. While man is at once the pinnacle of creation, the master and caretaker of the world, he is also dependent on the earth for his most basic needs. The Torah, in outlining the negative commandment of destroying fruit trees, refers to man himself as a tree of the field (Deut. 20:19). Our sages learn from this verse a prohibition against any needless destruction. In other words, fruit trees serve as the archetype for man's relationship and responsibility to his environment.

It was through a mistake in eating fruit that caused Adam and Eve's exile from the Garden of Eden. Eating fruit is a metaphor for our interaction with this world. Correct usage leads to a perfected world and spiritual bliss. Misuse leads to destruction and spiritual degradation. The seder of Tu B'Shvat is our opportunity to rectify the past iniquity and return once again to our rightful place within the Garden.

All say:

Adam and Eve erred by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. To correct this mistake, we eat our fruit today with pure intentions, as if from the Tree of Life.

A participant says:

Rabbi Chaim Vital wrote:

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

My teacher [the holy Arizal] used to say that one must intend while eating the fruits [at the Tu B'Shvat Seder] to repair the sin of Adam who erred by eating fruit from the tree.

Partaking in the physical world inappropriately, for its own sake, lowers us spiritually and diminishes our enjoyment. The solution is to engage in the physical world as a means to a worthy end -- i.e. appreciating the greatness of God who created all.

A participant says:

In the Talmud, Rabbi Abbun said: In the next world, a person will be judged for all the fine fruit that he saw but did not eat.

Rabbi Elazar fulfilled this teaching. Although he was very poor, he saved up small coins which he kept in a special pouch, to purchase new fruits as they came into season. He tried to make a blessing over every kind of fruit at least once a year.

Why one is held accountable for not eating a new fruit when presented with the opportunity?

Because each life forms, even fruit, is entrusted to a specific angel. By saying a blessing over a fruit, we empower that angel to reproduce more of that fruit. One who refrains from partaking of a fruit deprives the world of the spiritual influence that the blessing would have provided. (Chemdat Yamim)

The Talmud says that someone who eats and doesn't say a blessing is considered a thief. Why? Because every aspect of God's creation is inherently holy. So when one eats a piece of fruit, he is depriving the world of a piece of holiness. A blessing re-infuses the world with holiness. Eating without a blessing, however, lowers the level of holiness in the world without replacing the loss -- and is regarded as theft. (Maharal of Prague)

A participant says:

The Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidut, was once visiting the home of Rabbi Yaakov Koppel. When Rabbi Yaakov danced in front of his Shabbos table for an hour, the Baal Shem Tov asked to explain this unusual custom. Rabbi Yaakov replied: Before I taste physical food, I absorb the food's spiritual essence. In doing so, I become so excited that I sing and dance!

The leader says:

Everything in the physical world is a metaphor for a deeper spiritual concept.

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

Eating is to the body, what knowledge is to the soul. When we eat, we internalize the good part of the food -- and through that we grow and develop. Similarly, when we learn a new piece of information, we must chew it over, digest it, and integrate it into our very being. Only then can we truly grow in wisdom and spirituality.

Bread or cake:

Wheat and barley are the first two of the seven species connected to the greatness of the Land of Israel, as it says: A land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of olives and honey (Deut. 8:8).

We begin by eating bread or cake. When Tu B'Shvat falls on Shabbat, it is appropriate to incorporate the seder into one of the Shabbat meals, using challah as the bread. (last year we had barley soup)

Before saying the blessing, let us pause and reflect on our good fortune. G-d has given us innumerable blessings, enabling us to enjoy this food. G-d could easily have arranged for humans to be nourished by photosynthesis like plants, or by eating bland oatmeal, or by taking pills. Instead, He created a seemingly endless variety of appetizing and nourishing foods for us to enjoy. He gave us taste buds, and many miraculous organs with which to eat and digest the food.

A blessing is a thank-you note to our Creator. The sages say: Who is the wealthy person? The one who is happy with what he has. The more we appreciate our gifts, the more sincere is our thanks, and the more sublime is our pleasure.

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

THE FIRST WORLD: OLAM HA-ASSIYAH - THE WORLD OF ACTION

Assiyah - the first world, is the world of action. It is the world in which we assemble and shape artifacts without changing the form of God's raw material. It is the physical world represented by earth and the season of Winter. In the world of Assiyah, we drink white wine and eat fruits with hard outer shells and soft insides.

The white wine symbolizes the sleep that descends upon nature when the sun's rays begin to weaken. In winter the earth is sometimes barren, covered with snow. In winter we layer ourselves in clothing, blanketing ourselves from the cold just as the earth covered in snow is insulated. The fruit also symbolizes the winter season with its protected outside. Removing the hard shells exposes a fleshy vulnerable inside. The shell which conceals also protects. In the world of work, of everyday activity, the spiritual requires protection and nurturing. Special effort is necessary to protect it from indifference, from being forgotten, from unkind influences.

We crack the shells of the nuts and release the divine sparks for Tikun Olam, healing of the world. We crack the shells of our own preoccupations and our own pains.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria, a Talmudic sage of the 1st century CE, said: Anytime our wisdom exceeds our good deeds, to what are we likened? - to a tree whose branches are numerous but whose roots are few; then the wind comes and uproots it and turns it upside down.... But when our good deed exceed our wisdom, to what are we likened? - to a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are numerous; even if all the winds of the world were to come and blow against it, they could not budge it from its place....."

B'RACHOT/ BLESSINGS:

May it be your will, Hashem our God, that by virtue of our blessing and eating these fruits we shall enjoy the hidden heavenly roots from which they draw the divine flow of fruiting and blessing. Once again, abundantly fill them with Your glorious flow, nourish and ripen them for an entire year of blessing, good life, and peace. Amen.

As we eat the fruit of Assiyah, the physical world of action, may we be blessed with the courage to reveal ourselves, to be vulnerable, to grow, and to repair and help heal. The World of Action-our realm where evil exerts a powerful attraction is represented by those fruits, which are enclosed in a totally inedible, protective shell.

Meditation: As you toss away the peels and shells, you are peeling away the effects of evil in our lives. Peel away the materialism that prevents our spiritual growth.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the tree.	Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-etz
---	--

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

On a first fruit of the season:

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe for giving us life, for sustaining us and for enabling us to reach this season.

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, she-hecheyanu ve-kiyemanu ve-higi-anu laz'man ha-zeh

First course: Asiah

- 1.Pomegranate ("rimon") --- רימון
- 2.Walnut ("Egoz") --- אגוזי מלך
- 3.Almond ("Shekaydeem") --- שקדים
- 4.Pistachio ("Batneem") --- פיסטוק חלבי
- 5.Hazelnut ("Arnoneem") --- אגוזי לוה \ בונדוק
- 6.Coconut-
- 7.Cashew
- 8.Brazilian Nut
- 9.Pine nut
- 10.Chestnut ("Loozeem") --- ערמונים

(The substitute items for the list if I can't find the items are as follows: (or anything that falls into the groups)

Asiah- Inside eaten – has a skin. all types of nuts (including kashio), pasiflora (passion fruit), chocolate, coffee)

As we drink the first cup of wine, a white wine, may we feel the sleep of the winter as it refuels our body and soul and prepares us for the lengthening of the days, and the rebirth of nature.

The Almighty said: Although wine can be a source of trouble in this world, in the future I shall make it only a source of joy, as it says: 'And it shall come to pass on that day, that the mountains will drip with sweet wine' (Yoel 3:18). (Midrash - Vayikra Raba 12:5)

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

The branch and the tree

An Israelite in her relationship to the synagogue may be likened to a branch growing on a tree. As long as the branch is still attached to the tree, there is hope it may renew its vigor no matter how withered it has become;

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

but, once the living branch falls away, all hope is lost. So it is with a species - if endangered, there is still hope. Once extinct, all hope is lost. Nachmanides said: Scripture does not permit a destructive act that will cause the extinction of a species.

Walnuts

Rabbi Tarfon likened the people of Israel to a pile of walnuts. If one walnut is removed, each and every walnut in the pile will be shaken. When a single Jew is shaken, every other Jew is shaken and affected. (Avot D'Rabbi Natan) Likewise, when a single species is endangered, the entire ecosystem is shaken and affected.

As you toss away the peels and shells, see one of your bad character traits (anger, impatience, etc.) being tossed away. In your mind's eye, picture the bad trait as the shell. Then, as you toss it away, feel the trait leaving you. That's not the real you. The real you is the fruit... delicious and nourishing. See the trait going into the garbage.

Reb Nachman said: If a person kills a tree before its time, it is like having murdered a soul.

Pomegranates - Rimmonim

In the Song of Songs (Shir haShirim) we read: "Come my beloved, ... let us see...if the pomegranates are in bloom." The Rabbis comment: "These are the children who are busy learning the Torah; they sit in rows like pomegranate seeds." Thus the gleaming red pomegranate seeds remind us that we, too, must be attentive to study Torah, and learn how we must care for our world. *Children are the crowns of the Torah, adorning it just as silver rimmonim, pomegranates, adorn the top of the Torah Scroll. (Song of Songs Rabba 6:11)*

The human capacity to destroy is tremendous, so we must be very careful in all of our actions. The Jewish tradition provides us with a second principle, Yishuv Ha'aretz, the settling of the land, or in modern terms, sustainable development. This requires careful planning and consideration in the building of our social life, so that we may achieve a just, productive, healthy and sustainable society. How do we do this? By way of the 3 pillars upon which the world stands (Pirkei Avot):

The world stands on three things: on Torah, on worship, and on acts of loving kindness.		Al sh'losha d'varim (2x) Al shlosha, shlosha d'varim Ha-olam (2x) omeid Al haTorah (2x), v'al ha'avodah V'al g'milut chasadim
Torah (Law, learning): We study B'reisheet and learn the relationship between humanity and all of creation. We study	Avodah (Work, service) We pray and worship, as we do tonight, with kavanah	G'milut Chasadim (Acts of loving kindness): We take action in our private and congregational lives, to minimize consumption of trees and other resources.

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

other biblical and rabbinic texts that speak to our responsibility. And we are commanded to study the natural world itself.		
---	--	--

Rabbi Hanina, Rabbi Yochanan, and Rav Habiba taught the following: Whoever can protest and prevent their household from committing a wrongdoing and does not, is accountable for the wrongdoings of their household ...

The Jewish tradition teaches us that our relations with all things in the world of action can lead us to higher spiritual levels. By internalizing and acting on the Jewish values of *chesed* (caring), *tzedakah* (righteousness), *rachamim* (compassion), and *kavanah* (proper intention) we can create and sustain a world in harmony with Being. Through action, and also through study of the Torah - which is likened to water - we can enter the World of Formation.

THE SECOND WORLD: OLAM HA'YETZIRAH - THE WORLD OF FORMATION

Joyfully shall you draw upon the fountains of deliverance.

U-shavtem mayim b'sason mi-my-nei ha-y'shu-a.

Yetzirah, the second world, the most vulnerable, is the world of Formation. It is the world in which we cause a transformation of raw materials, such as making bricks from clay. We acknowledge God as creator not only of the physical world but also of our ability to be creative, our capacity to feel, speak, and sing. It is the emotional world represented by water and the season of Spring. In the world of Yetzirah, we drink white wine with a dash of red and eat fruits with soft outsides and hard inner cores.

The white wine with a dash of red symbolizes the gradual deepening of color which parallels the reawakening of colors in nature as the sun brings them back to life. In spring the sun's rays begin to thaw the frozen earth and the first flowers appear on the hillsides. In the full warmth of spring we go outdoors to be with nature. No longer coating ourselves in protective attire, we expose our soft bodies to the sun. We eat fruit containing pits and we are reminded that, despite the wondrous expressions of our spirit, we are still tied to the hard pit of our ego. We are still concealed, deep inside, protecting our divine sparks even from within.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, Rabbi Eleazar, Rabbi Abba, and Rabbi Yose were sitting one day beneath some trees on the plain by the Sea of Ginnosar. Rabbi Simeon said "The shade spread over us by these trees is so pleasant! We must crown this place with words of Torah!" (Zohar)

And if you ask me of G-d, my G-d. 'Where is G-d that in joy we may worship?' Here on Earth too G-d lives, not in Heaven alone. A striking fir, a rich furrow, in them you will find G-d's likeness. Divine image incarnate in every high mountain. Wherever the breath of life flows, you will find G-d embodied. And G-d's household? All being: the gazelle, the turtle, the shrub, the cloud pregnant with thunder. G-d in creation is G-d's eternal name. (Saul Tchernikovsky, Haskalah poet)

Yetizara

1. Olive -- זיתים
2. Date --- תאנים מיובשות
3. Persimmon -
4. Plum -
5. Apricot –
6. Crab apple (substitute green apples) Medlar ("Oozradeen") --
7. Mango
8. Peach
9. Papaya

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

10. Cherry ("Geendash") --- דובדבנים (רגילים) חמצמצים

The substitute items for the list if I can't find the items are as follows: (or anything that falls into the groups) nectarina, litchi, tamar, hindi

"The trees have borne their fruit, fig tree and vine have yielded their strength. Children of Zion be happy, rejoice in the Lord, your God."

As we eat the fruit of Yetzirah, the emotional world of Formation, may our hearts be open to the feelings and needs of ourselves and others, allowing the warmth of our care through the world.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the tree.

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz

As we drink the second cup of wine, white with a dash of red, may we, like the flowers, blossom into our full potential.

White wine represents nature in potential. Red wine represents nature in full bloom. On this day, we begin to leave the winter behind and move into a period of renewal and life.

It is stated in the Zohar: Wine has two colors -- white and red. White is from the right side [of kindness]; red from the left side [of strength and judgment].

As we progress from white to red, we move from potential to actuality. We are able to appreciate God's judgment as well as His kindness. We see God's design and goodness in the world with increasing clarity.

The edible parts of the fruit represent holiness. Pits represent impurities which have penetrated the holiness. As the color of the wine begins to get darker, we can start to see potential turn into reality. The inedible part has now moved from the outside to the inside of the fruit. This is advancement toward purity. In addition, the inedible part is no longer waste; it is a seed with potential to grow.

Imagine one of your bad traits as this seed. Really see it. Then, see that trait growing and developing into something great. This trait no longer holds you back, but propels you forward. Many great people have turned their faults into assets. You too can become great.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri hagafen.
--

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

Olives:

The Sages taught: "Just as olive oil brings light into the world, so do the Jewish People bring light into the world."¹⁰ *Olives yield the best of its oil only when the fruit is crushed.* The olive tree is a sign of hope that, despite the enormity of destruction, 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)

Date - Tamar

The date palm abounds in blessing, for every part of it can be used, every part is needed. Its dates are for eating, its branches are for blessing on Sukkot; its fronds are for thatching, its fibers are for ropes; its webbing for sieves; its thick trunks for building. The date reminds us of the commandment - Bal Tashchit - to not waste.

The date is also cause for joy. When Moses heard that the spies had returned, the spies were requested to give their report. They said, "We came unto the land to which you sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey." This was not an exaggeration for honey flowed from the date palm trees under which the goats grazed, out of whose udders poured milk, so that both milk and honey moistened the ground. (Sotah 35a) "The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree."¹¹ The righteous are fruitful and sweet, just like a date palm. *Dates are often a metaphor for the righteous, as the date tree is both lofty and fruit-bearing. Further, as the date tree is impervious to the changing winds, so too are the Jewish people.*

Grapes:

"Just as a vine has large and small clusters and the large ones hang lower, so too the Jewish people: Whoever labors in Torah and is greater in Torah, seems lower than his fellow [due to his humility]."¹² *Grapes can be turned into very different sorts of food (raisins) and drink (wine); so too, each Jew has the potential to be successful in some aspect of Torah and mitzvot observance and to be special in his or her own way.*

Figs:

Rabbi Yochanan said: "What is the meaning of 'He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit'?"¹³ Why is the Torah compared to a fruit tree? Figs on a tree do not ripen all at once, but a little each day. Therefore, the longer one searches in the tree, the more figs he finds. So too with Torah: The more one studies, the more knowledge and wisdom one finds."

The Formation of Environmental Ethics

In the World of Formation in which we are most vulnerable, we might wonder what miniscule difference can we as individuals or even as congregations, make in the vast scheme of things. Maimonides teaches us that we

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

should consider the entire world as if it were exactly balanced between acts of righteousness and of evil. The very next action we take, therefore, can save or condemn the world.

Again, a tree serves as a metaphor - the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is through our interaction with this tree that we come to be aware of the implications of our actions - of the positivity and negativity of our acts irrespective of the benefit to us. We must form principles on which to base our actions - ethics of behavior. How can we structure our lives to create the greatest harmony between people, between people and the environment, and between people and the Creator of all?

THE THIRD WORLD: *OLAM HAB'RIYAH* - THE WORLD OF CREATION

"Fill the Earth and master it", G-d commands humanity in the first account of the Creation of the world. The account also emphasizes that the created world, and all that fill it - the land and the seas, the trees and grass, the sun, moon, and stars, fish and birds, creeping things and land animals - are good. G-d also blesses the birds and the fish to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:22). We are given a unique role, and yet we are also part of the entire world, all of which G-d said was "good".

"The Eternal formed a human from the dust of the Earth. G-d blew into its nostrils the breath of life, and the human became a living being...The Eternal took and placed the human being in the Garden of Eden, to cultivate it and to protect it." (Genesis 2:7,2:15) We are instructed to cultivate for our human needs, but to do it in a manner that does not deplete and degrade Creation, but rather allows all life to flourish.

B'riyah, the third world, is the world of Creation. It is the world of thoughts represented by air and the season of summer. In the world of B'riyah, we drink red wine with a dash of white, reminding us that as the land becomes warmer and the colors of the fruits deepen as they ripen, we too become warmer and more open.

As human beings, struggling to survive in a world which often seems antagonistic to our integrity, we can develop hard shells to protect our inner core, like the fruit of the first world. Although we survive as individuals within our shells, we remain partly hidden and cut off from each other, and touching one another takes the patient effort of separating the protective layer from the inner core while keeping the core intact. We can also be more like the fruit of the second world, available up to a point, but withholding our innermost part, perhaps needing a secret toughness to keep from collapsing under the pressure.

But in our most precious relationships, we are most like the fruit that are soft throughout and that can be taken whole, available to each other in every aspect and facet of our personalities and strong in a way which does not cut any part of us off from ourselves or from each other. At this moment of I-Thou there is no inner shell, like the fruits of B'riyah. We feel at one with each other and with all creation.

Once when Rav Kook was walking in the fields, lost deep in thought, the young student with him plucked a leaf off a branch. Rav Kook was visibly shaken by this act, and turning to his companion he said gently, "Believe me when I tell you, I never simply pluck a leaf or a blade of grass or any living thing, unless I have to." He explained further, "Every part of the vegetable world is singing a song and breathing forth a secret of the divine mystery of the Creation." For the first time the young student understood what it means to show compassion to all creatures. (Wisdom of the Jewish Mystics)

The World of Creation-far removed from the realm of impurity- is represented by those fruits which are wholly edible This is the highest level in the created world.

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

Meditation: *Sowing seeds is also like the fulfillment of good deeds. Once a seed is planted, it breaks apart and releases growth potential. In other words, it ceases to be what it was and becomes something greater. When a Jew fulfills a mitzvah, it is because God has commanded him to do so. He lets go of his ego and his inclinations and becomes something greater than he was before.* As we eat the fruit of B'riyah, the world of thoughts and creation, may our thoughts and actions be integrated. May we create harmony in our lives and in the world.

Beriah

1. Fig - תאנים טריות-
2. Apple --- תפוחי עץ---
3. Pear ("Agaseem") --- אגסים---
4. Carob ("Charooveen") --- חרובים---
5. Candied Chinese oranges (kumquats)
6. Kiwi
7. Starfruit
8. Raisins
9. Citron ("Etrog") --- אתרוג---
10. Quince ("Pereesheen") --- חבושים---
11. Pineapple
- 12.

The substitute items for the list if I can't find the items are as follows: (or anything that falls into the groups)

Beriah - Entirely eaten -

guava, fejoia, pitango, petel (raspberry), uchmaniot (blackberry), afarsemon, karambola, (substitutue an orange for Etrog if needed)

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the tree.

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz

As we drink the third cup of wine, red with a dash of white, may we cherish the warmth of the season and the abundance of our harvesting.

Wine rejoices the heart of man. This refers to the wine of Torah. *Yayin* (Hebrew for wine) equals 70, the numerical value of *Sod*, meaning secret. [Wine represents the hidden aspects of the Torah.] (Zohar -- Parshat Pinchas).

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe
--

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

who creates the fruit of the vine.

hagafen.

Etrog (Oranges may be substituted)

The etrog is unique. The blossom (Pitom) end does not fall off after pollination as with other fruit. For this reason the etrog became a symbol of fertility. It is customary to preserve it with cloves and save it from Sukkot until Tu B'Shvat or make preserves of it after Sukkot to be eaten on Tu B'Shvat.

"What is this fruit of the tree of loveliness that its fruit is beauty and itself is beauty? It is the etrog. Could it not be the pomegranate? No, for though its fruit be lovely, not so the tree. Could it be the carob? No, for though the tree be lovely, not so the fruit. But where the fruit and tree alike are beauty - that is the etrog alone. (Jerusalem Talmud).

Just as the etrog provides both nourishment and fragrance, so in Israel there are people who provide both wisdom and perform good deeds. (Vayikra Rabba 30.12)

FIG - T'ainah

The fig is mentioned in the Bible sixteen times together with the vine as the most important fruit of Eretz Israel. The fig motif illustrates an era of peace and security in the past, and an ideal vision for the future.

Fig Tree and Torah

Rabbi Yochanan said: What is the meaning of 'He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit'? (Proverbs 27:18) Why is the Torah compared to a fruit tree? Figs on a tree do not ripen all at once, but a little each day. Therefore, the longer one searches in the tree, the more figs he finds. So too with Torah: The more one studies, the more knowledge and wisdom one finds. (Talmud - Eruvin 54a)

Carob - Charuv

The carob has a special place in Jewish life; during the war with Rome, the Israelites lived under a siege and managed to survive by eating the fruit of the carob tree.

The Hebrew words for carob (charuv), sword (cherev), and destruction (churban) have a similar linguistic root. The carob is even sword shaped. It reminds us to temper even this joyous occasion with the remembrance of suffering throughout the world.

A Talmudic story is told about Honi, who saw an old man planting a carob tree. His grandchild was helping him. Honi laughed. "Foolish man", he said, "do you think you will still be alive to eat the fruit of this tree?" The old

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

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."

Things are coming close to their full potential. Even the seeds are now edible. They not only have future potential, but are also delicious and ready to eat right now.

Think about an area of life you would like to improve. Picture your ideal self. Realize that's the real you. Now, for the rest of Tu B'Shvat, actually be that person. Act as if you're already there. The experience can be transformational.

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

THE FOURTH WORLD: *OLAM HA'ATZILUT* - THE WORLD OF EMANATION

Who is like you among the heavenly powers, Adonai!
Who is like you, mighty in holiness, too awesome for
praise, doing wonders!

Mi chamocha ba-elim Adonai? Mi Kamocha, ne-edar
bakodesh, Nora t'hilot, oseh feleh?

Atzilut, the fourth world, is the world of Emanation. It is the purely spiritual world represented by fire. In the autumn world of Atzilut, we drink deep red wine and eat no fruit, for this world cannot be represented by any fruit. The pure red wine represents the full bloom of nature before the cold winter. As nature expends its last bit of energy, a full cycle is completed. As we have passed through each world, we have changed with each season. We began by protecting our soft inner self and slowly peeled our hard outer layer. Within that soft layer another hardness was found, protected by the softness which surrounded it. We came to a place where there was no distinction between the protected and the protective.

In the world of Atzilut, we become aware of God's love, mercy, wisdom and other realities perceived with our hearts, not our senses. Our hearts are full and we praise the Source which renews all creation.

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 Lord, and lift up my hands to You in worship, on my behalf, and that of my children!

Reb Nachman of Breslov

As we drink the fourth cup of pure red wine, may we become strong, like healthy trees, with solid roots in the ground and with our arms open to the love that is all around us.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri

Tu B'Shvat Seder - The New Year for the Trees

who creates the fruit of the vine.

hagafen.

May it be Your will, O God of our mothers and fathers, that through our eating of the fruits which we have blessed, that the trees will be filled with the glory of their ability to renew themselves for new blossoming and growth, from the beginning of the year to its end, so that our lives too will be renewed and filled with goodness, blessings, and peace.

L'Shana tova uv'racha p'ri ut'nuvah.

May the year be fruitful and blessed!

L'shana haba'a bi-Y'rushalayim hab'nuya .

Next year in Jerusalem rebuilt!

May the Jerusalem of our souls be rekindled as we open our hearts to the world, and take good care of God's world.

References:

Visit the websites below for more on Tu B'Shvat and other Jewish Holidays

http://www.aish.com/tubshvat/tubshvatdefault/Kabbalistic_Tu_Bshvat_Seder.asp

http://kabbalahgroup.org/articles/tubshevat_seder.htm

http://www.coejl.org/tubshvat/documents/tub_haggadah.php

<http://www.scheinerman.net/judaism/tubshevat/treeseder.html>

http://www.babaganewz.com/index_main.cfm?cat=9&sub=TuBShevatSeder

<http://www.RabbiShimon.com>

Researched, collected and prepared by:

Leah D'vorah Davis, Deerfield Beach, Florida.

<http://RabbiShimon.com>

Tu B'Shvat 5769 / 2009