



A Tu biShvat Seder

We celebrate the New Year of the Trees today! Today marks the day when the rabbis thought that trees began to emerge from their winter sleep, it also marks the day when the year of taxes on fruit begins.

Why a Jewish New Year of the Trees? A reminder of our connection to the land in general - all things come from the earth and we must be mindful of their source and being good caretakers of our planet. Also a reminder of our connection to the Land of Israel - the seasons that we follow are Israeli seasons, and we celebrate our tie to that land even though we are far from it.

We have four types of drinks and four types of fruit - each important, each representing a season, each corresponding to deeper ideas of meaning. The composers of the Tu beShvat Seder were Jewish mystics, and they connect our ties to the earth, with our ties to the divine, using the four worlds of Jewish mysticism, or Kabbalah.

עשייה

First Cup, First Fruit, the World of Asiyah/Doing

Our first cup of fruit of the vine is white, symbolizing winter. As we drink it we recall that nature has been dormant these many months, awaiting the warmth of spring and the cycle of rebirth in the land.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, boray peree hagafen.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fruit of the vine.

The first kind of fruit we eat in honor of Tu biShvat is the type which has an outer inedible shell - like nuts, pomegranates, citrus, pineapples, coconuts, bananas or kiwis.

The world of doing requires protection - we form hard shells like these fruits to protect us as we do the physical things we need to plant, grow, and pick the fruit and food we need to live.

In Israel the almond tree blooms at this time - its white blossoms tinged with pink brighten the countryside after the bleak gray of winter.

The almond has earned the nickname "The King of Tu biShvat"

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, boray peree ha-aytz.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fruit of the tree.

The Talmud has a story in it about an old man who was planting a carob tree as a king rode by. The king called out to him, and said, "How old are you?"

The man replied, "I am seventy years old, your majesty."

The king asked, "How long before that tree you are planting will bear fruit?"

"About seventy years or so."

"Do you expect to eat the fruit of the tree you are planting?" the king asked.

"Of course not your majesty. But just as I found fruit trees when I was born, so I plant them for those who come after me."

In Israel the Jewish National Fund has been planting trees for about 100 years. It has made the desert bloom and turned the barren wastelands into forests. Jews from around the world have shared in this project by helping to plant trees in Israel.

Tree Song

יצירה

Second Cup, Second Fruit, the World of Yetzira/Formation

Our second cup of fruit of the vine is white, with a little red, symbolizing the beginning of springtime, the change begins to color winter more warmly.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, boray peree hagafen.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fruit of the vine.

The second kind of fruit we eat has a pit which cannot be eaten - like dates, olives, peaches, apricots, plums, avocados, and cherries.

The world of formation is the feeling part of us - emotions of creativity guide us as we feel out the right place to plant to create and not tear down.

When the Torah speaks of a "land flowing with milk and honey", it refers to the honey from the date palm tree, or *tamar*. We say that the *tamar* abounds in blessings because all parts of it can be used.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, boray peree ha-aytz.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fruit of the tree.

The Giving Tree

בְּרִיאָה

Third Cup, Third Fruit, the World of Bree-ah/Creation

Our third cup of fruit of the vine is red, with a little white, symbolizing the fullness of late spring and the bounty of summer, all fills with warmth and life's richness.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, boray peree hagafen.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fruit of the vine.

The third kind of fruit we eat can be entirely eaten - like figs, seedless berries and grapes. The world of creation is the thinking part of us - plans, ideas, structures - all are needed as we aim to build a world that sustains us.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, boray peree ha-aytz.

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fruit of the tree.

How about some wheat?

Reader: Sing praises to the mighty grain of wheat!
All: *Grain of wheat!*
Reader: It gave us some amazing things to eat!
All: *Things to eat!*
Reader: Bread and matzah.
Reader: Cheerios.
Reader: Cakes and crackers.
Reader: Praises to the mighty grain of wheat!
All: *Grain of wheat!*
Reader: Praises to the mighty grain of wheat!
All: *Grain of wheat!*
Reader: Make a broom or burn it to make heat!
All: *Lots of heat!*
Reader: In a mattress, in a mat.
Reader: In a scsarecrow, in a hat.
Reader: Sing praises to the mighty grain of wheat!
All: *Grain of wheat!*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.
Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, ha-motzee lechem meen ha-aretz.
Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe,
who brings forth bread from the earth.

אַצִּילוֹת

Fourth Cup, Fourth Fruit, the World of Atzeelut/Emanation

Our fourth cup of fruit of the vine is all red, symbolizing the harvest of late summer and fall, and the retreat into inner growth that happens as winter approaches.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.
Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, boray peree hagafen.
Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates fruit of the vine.

The world of emanation is the spiritual part of us - inspiration from the deepest parts of our selves, most connected with the divine, and impossible to describe, so we have no fruit, only essence, represented by the aroma of spices.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִינֵי בְּשָׂמִים.
Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, boray minay be-sameem.
Praised are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates varieties of spices.

May it be your will our God that through our eating and drinking of these blessed fruits of trees and vines that the trees of Israel will renew themselves with healthy blossoms and growth.

We pray that our celebration of Tu b'Shvat will inspire us with continued sensitivity to the natural gifts of the earth that we must tend and guard.

We offer thanks to God who has given us trees and their fruit.

It is a tree of life...

<i>Eytz chayim hee la-ma-chazeekem bah ve-tomecha me-ushar. Deracheh-hah darchay no-am vechol-neteevotecha shalom.</i>	עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה ותמכיה מאשר: דרכיה דרכי נעם וכל גתיבותיה שלום:
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It is a tree of life to those who grasp it, and whoever holds onto it is happy.

Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace.

(Proverbs 3:18, 17)