

A Haggadah for



Tu Bishvat

A tree of life to those who hold fast to it, and all who cling to it find happiness. Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace. (Proverbs 3:17-18)

Cantor Wendy Gonzales



Lyle Wolinsky, President

Becky Siman, Vice President

Cantor Wendy:

Welcome and Song

The Kabbalists, a group of Jewish mystics living in Israel in the 16th century created a Seder for Tu B'Shevat. They gathered around a beautiful table decorated with sweet-smelling flowers and lovely candles. Long into the night, they sang, and talked, and ate. Today we gather as they did to study, sing, and celebrate the great miracle of the trees!

Please sing with Cantor Wendy:

Hine ma tov u'ma na-im, she-vet a'chim gam ya-chad.

Behold how good and how pleasing for us to be together.

Reader:

For a thousand years we lived in Zion, but for two thousand years Zion lived in us. Throughout the exile and our wanderings, Zion was the center of our life.

At worship we faced toward Jerusalem. At Seder time we called out, "Next year in Jerusalem!" We prayed for rain in Zion, and celebrated its harvest festivals. We mourned its destruction and wept over its devastation.

Our hope was to see the fulfillment of the biblical promise.

Together:

*And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel,
And they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them
And they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof;
They shall also make gardens and eat the fruit thereof*

(Amos 9:14)

Today we come together to reaffirm our bond with the life of Israel and rejoice in the rebirth occurring in our Land. Tu Bi Shevat (Rosh haShanah la'Eelano) marks the awakening of nature after its winter slumber. We celebrate on the 15th day of the

month Shevat – Tu is a combination of the two Hebrew letters, tet and vav – whose numerical value is 15, hence the 15th day of Shevat!

Sing with Cantor Wendy:

עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה. ותמכה מאשר שלום

It is the tree of life to them that hold fast to it; all its supporters are happy! Shalom!

The Four Questions for Tu B'Shevat

Why is this day different from all other days?

1. Other New Year celebrations honor events and people. Why does this New Year honor trees?
2. On other days, we eat many kinds of foods. Why today do we especially eat fruits which grow in Israel?
3. On other days, we take trees and fruit for granted. Why today do we think about conserving and sharing?
4. In many parts of the world, it is wintery and cold. Why today do we speak of planting?

As we complete our seder today, we will have answered these four questions!

(Fill first cup with all white wine/grape juice.)

Reader:

We will drink four cups of wine during our seder to represent the four seasons. The first cup we drink is white – without color, to remind us of the winter when nature is asleep. We have spent so long in the winter of our year, thirsting for the color we know must yet come. We drink and recall nature's dormancy these many months. We eagerly await the warmth of spring and the annual cycle of rebirth.



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Blessed are You, Our G-d, Sovereign of our Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ
וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנוֹ הַזֶּה.

Blessed are You, Our G-d, Sovereign of our Universe, who has granted us life and brought us together in this season of our joy.

(All drink the first cup of wine/grape juice.)

On our table are three plates of fruit, each of them different. During our seder, we will taste fruits from each plate, so we may notice and appreciate their differences.

The first kind of fruit we eat has an outer inedible shell – the almond. In Israel, the almond tree (shkeidiah), now blooms. Its white blossoms tinged with pink, brighten the countryside after the bleak colorless days of winter. To flower and produce fruit while winter is still in force is a brave act. It is not easy to move about in the real world and we frequently need protection. So, as the almond, we develop a strong outer shell to protect our being. Other fruits on this dish can include an orange, tangerine, grapefruit, pomegranate, mango, walnut, peanut, kiwi, or coconut.

Let us recite the blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Blessed are you, O G-d, who creates the fruit of the trees.

After reciting the blessing, please enjoy tasting the fruit on your seder plate.



The Talmud tells us that when a new baby was born, the parents planted a cedar tree for a boy and a cypress tree for a girl. The children cared for their trees, and when they grew up and were ready to be married, branches from the two trees were used to make the pillars of the chuppah! By planting trees people showed they believed in a future for their children, who would grow up enjoying the fruit, shade, breeze and beauty provided by trees.

The Second Cup of Wine (or Grape Juice):

The second cup of wine is darker. We pour a bit of red wine into the white and watch it change colors. In Israel, as spring approaches, the sun's rays begin to thaw the frozen earth. Gradually the land changes its colors from white to red, as pink and white cyclamens or flowering plants appear in the mountains.

Before we drink the second cup of wine, we recite:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Blessed are You, Our G-d, Sovereign of our universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

The Second Plate of Fruit

We now choose from our seder plate filled with fruits that contain pits or seeds that cannot be eaten such as peaches, plums, avocados, dates, olives, cherries, apricots, and mangos.

Let us recite the blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Blessed are you, O G-d, who creates the fruit of the trees. After reciting the blessing, please enjoy tasting the fruit on your seder plate.



Reader:

After the Temple was destroyed, and the Jews were forced to leave Eretz Yisrael, there was not purpose for planting and tithing crops outside of Israel. But the holiday was fortunately preserved as a symbol of the love of the Jewish people for their land. It became a custom to eat fruits that grow in the Holy Land – almonds, dates, olives, figs, carob, and pomegranates.

The Kabbalists created a formal Tu B'Shevat celebration modeled after the Passover Seder. Their Haggadah, called *Pri Etz Hadar, The Fruit of the Goodly Tree*, contained readings about trees from the Bible and the Talmud. They ate 15 different kinds of fruits, nuts, and grains, and drank four cups of wine – as we are doing today!

In modern times, Tu B'Shevat has taken on a newer meaning. With the rebirth of the State of Israel, trees have become the symbol of rebuilding the land. When the early pioneers came to Palestine, the land was barren from centuries of wars and neglect. They planted trees and made the land bloom again.

Artzah Alinu was a song that the Israeli pioneers sang while they planted. **Please sing with Cantor Wendy:**

Artzah alinu, artzah alinu, artzah alinu. (repeat)
K'var charashnu v'gam zaranu (repeat)
Aval od lo katzarnu (repeat)

We have come up to the land, we have tilled the soil, and sown the seeds, be we have yet to harvest our crop.



In 1901, the Jewish National Fund was created to raise money to buy back and cultivate the land of Israel. Since that time, blue and white tzedakah boxes have been distributed to Jewish homes all over the world so that families might contribute to this effort. The JNF has planted over 240 million trees throughout Israel.

The Third Cup of Wine (or Grape Juice):

The third cup of wine is still darker than the second cup. Now we pour our red wine into our kiddush cups with just a dash of white wine (or grape juice). Watch the effect of the colors mix together! As summer arrives in Israel, the land becomes bright red. Tulips and red poppies burst forth and bloom. The ground becomes soft. The farmer turns over the earth and drops in the seeds. Water, sunshine, and time combine to create new life.

Before we drink the third cup of wine, we recite:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Blessed are You, Our G-d, Sovereign of our universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.



The Third Plate of Fruit

We now choose from our seder plate filled with fruits that are edible both on the inside and the outside, including: grapes, raisins, figs, cranberries, apples, pears, strawberries, and carob. It has been said in the Midrash, “Why is the Torah compared to a fig? Other fruits have something inedible: dates have pits, grapes have seeds, pomegranates have skin. But every part of the fig is good to eat!”

Let us recite the blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ.

Blessed are you, O G-d, who creates the fruit of the trees.

After reciting the blessing, please enjoy tasting the fruit on your seder plate.

Reader:

Why should we think about conservation and sharing? How important are trees? Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai taught, “If you should be standing with a sapling in your hand when the Messiah arrives, first finish planting the tree, then go and greet the Messiah.” The Torah tells us that when you make war against a city, you must not destroy its trees, because the trees of the field are your life. So it is clear we are to conserve and avoid waste to care for our environment. Throughout history, Jewish people have cared about the well being of all who are hungry. The laws of the Torah required farmers to leave the corners of their wheat, grape, and olive fields uncut. Harvesters could not pick up any stalks they had forgotten or dropped. These “leftovers” were reserved for the poor and the stranger to gather and eat. The Rabbis called the Torah *Etz Chaim*, the Tree of Life.

A *Tzadik*, a righteous person, is often compared to the cedar tree because it grows straight – as does the righteous person. The cedar’s shade extends a great distance, just as the righteous person’s good deeds help many others. As we consider the importance of the mitzah of tzedakah, let us:

Sing with Cantor Wendy:

Tzadik katamar yifrach, yifrach;
Tzadik katamar yifrach. (Repeat)
K’erez ba’L’vanon yisgeh (repeat twice),
yisgeh.

The righteous shall flourish like palms, grow tall like cedars in Lebanon.



The Fourth Cup of Wine (or Grape Juice):

The fourth cup of wine is all red. Summer ends and the trees are filled with blossoming flowers and the crops are growing tall as we reach autumn, the season of the harvest. This also symbolizes the mystical concept of fire and the idea that within all living things dwells a spark of G-d.

Before we drink the fourth cup of wine, we recite:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Blessed are You, Our G-d, Sovereign of our universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

As we wind down our beautiful seder, we sing a song that is sung as the Israeli children plant trees. This song celebrates the beautiful almond tree:

Please sing with Cantor Wendy:

Hashkedyah porachat, hashemesh gam zorachat

Tziporim al rosh kol gag m'vasrot et bo he'chag.

Tu B'shevat higiyah, chag ha'ilanot. (Repeat)

The almond trees bloom under the sun's rays. The birds on the rooftops chirp a welcome. Tu B'Shevat, the holiday of trees has arrived.

The Fourth Plate of Fruit

Instead of fruit on this fourth and final plate, the plate contains the seeds from the various fruits, apples, peaches, pears, mangos, etc. The symbolism for this is to participate in the mitzvah of planting.

While we may not be able to do this on our cold, wintry day in January – we might make a donation to the Jewish National Fund –



or any other environmental organization that is nurturing or repairing the land.

This beautiful song about planting can inspire us as we look forward to the spring to plant – whether in an outdoor plot or even within your apartment or home.

Please sing with Cantor Wendy:

CHORUS:

Inch by inch, row by row, gonna make this garden grow,
All it takes is a rake and a hoe and a piece of fertile ground.
Inch by inch, row by row, please bless these seeds I sow,
Please keep them safe below – till the rain comes tumblin' down.

Pullin' weeds and pickin' stones, we are made of dreams and bones,
Need a spot to call my own for the time is close at hand.
Grain for grain, sun and rain, find my way in nature's chain,
Tune my body and my brain to the music of the land. (CHORUS)

Plant your rows straight and long, temper them with prayer and song,
Mother Earth will make you strong if you give her loving care.
Old crow watches from a tree, got his hungry eye on me, in my garden I'm as free as that feathered thief up there. (CHORUS)



We end our seder now with the blessing of thanks for the food and wine we have shared:

Together:

Baruch ata Adonai eloheinu Melech ha'olam al hagafen v'al p'ri hagafen, al ha'eitz v'al p'ri ha'eitz. Amen.

Blessed are You, O G-d, for the vine and its fruit and the tree and its fruit. Amen.

May it be Your will that the trees whose fruit we have eaten and blessed today will be filled with the strength to flourish and grow during the coming year...for goodness and for blessing, for life and for peace.

In every seed, there is the promise of a new and vital plant. So it is with every person. Each life holds the promise of a new generation.

L'shana tovah uv'racha p'ri ut'nuvah.
May the year be fruitful and blessed!

