



Tu B'Shevat



Seder

The New Year for Trees
February 2023



MileHi Church

It's different here.



Kabbalah
Experience

Welcome to our Tu b'Shevat Seder סדר ט"ו בשבט



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Opening Intention

*A great truth comes over him:
Trees fall with spectacular crashes.
But planting is silent
and growth is invisible.*

Richard Powers, *The Overstory*





Tu b'Shevat Seder

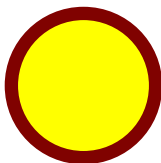
Tu b'Shevat is the Rosh Hashanah L'Ilanot – The New Year for Trees. It falls on the fifteenth day of the month (full moon) of Shevat. In Israel the winter rains come to an end. The sap starts to rise in the trees and the first buds emerge on almond trees.

The Tu b'Shevat Seder originated among the 16th century Kabbalists in Tzfat, Israel. Those mystics gathered on cold, dank and dark evenings around tables covered with bread, fruit, nuts, drink, and candles. Tonight, we assemble in the winter to celebrate the amazing potential which slumbers in the trees around us and in each of us.

Seder means an order—and so we will follow a fourfold order unique to the ritual of Tu b'Shevat—journeying through the four worlds as outlined in Kabbalah:

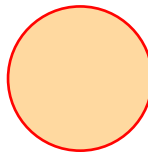
Asiyah: *The World of Action*

Fruit or nut with hard shell



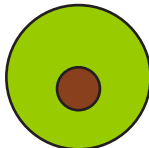
Briyah: *The World of Thought*

Fruit with edible seeds



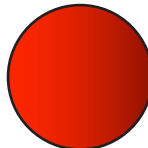
Yetzirah: *The World of Emotion*

Fruit with a hard pit



Atzilut: *The World of Union*

Fruit Juice



Everything in the physical world is a metaphor for a deeper spiritual reality. Eating and drinking is to the body, what knowledge is to the soul. When we eat, we internalize the food — and through that we grow and develop physically. Similarly, when we learn we must chew it over, digest it, and then integrate the wisdom into our being.



David Sanders

A young girl looks out the window and notices the tree in the front yard swaying in the wind. She asks her father, “How does the tree move its branches like that?” Now the father was preoccupied and almost said, “The tree is not moving the branches, the wind is.” But before the words were out, he caught himself and rose from his chair and went to the window to join his daughter. From inside, behind the window, they could neither feel nor hear the wind and the father thought, “How can I possibly be sure that the branches are moving from the wind rather than moving from the tree itself?”

He then asked his daughter, “Do you really think the tree is moving the branches?” and she replied, “If the tree is dancing it would need music, so maybe the music is in the wind. Maybe the wind carries a music that only the trees can hear.





Tu b'Shevat Melody Batya Levine

Led by Eitan Kantor

Let us begin by breaking bread together:

Blessing over bread:

ברוך את הויה המוציא לחם מן הארץ

♫ *Bruchah at havayah ha-motzei lechem min ha-aretz*

Blessed are you infinite presence gifting us with bread

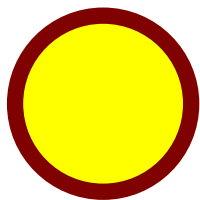
A song for Tu b'Shevat

♫ *Hashkedeyah Porachat— V'shemesh
paz zorachat. Tziporim merosh kol gag.
M'Vasrot im bo hachag. Tu b'Shevat higia,
Chag la'ilanot. Tu b'Shevat higiya,
Chag la'ilanot.*

*The almond tree is blooming
The golden sun is glowing
The birds sing out in joy and glee
From every roof and every tree
Tu b'Shevat is here
The festival of trees
Tu b'Shevat is here
The festival of trees*

Tu Tu Tu Tu b'Tu b'Shevat





World of Asiyah (Action):

Fruit or nuts with inedible hard shells or peels.

Take a fruit or nut and peel or crack it open. Notice the effort needed to get to the fruit inside. When the nut or fruit is ready to be eaten we say the blessing over fruit:

ברוך את הויה בורא פרי העץ

♫ *Bruchah at havayah boreh pri ha-eitz*

Blessed are you infinite presence gifting us with fruit.

What does the shell represent?

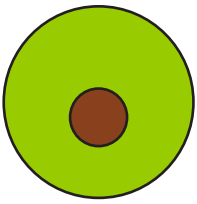
📖 First Reader reads the following piece by Pema Chodron from *Wisdom of No Escape*:

“What we are doing here is removing armor. We are undoing all this stuff that covers over our wisdom and our gentleness, and our awake quality. It takes courage and fearlessness to remove all the armor that covers this awakeness. Nobody else can take it off because nobody else knows where all the locks are. Nobody else knows where it’s sewed up tight, where it’s going to take a lot of work to get that particular iron thread untied. Being a part of a spiritual community means committing to being in brotherhood and sisterhood with people who are committed to taking off their armor.”

For Discussion: As you peel or cut into your fruit or crack open the hard shell of your nut reflect on what is internal and external to you? The world of the shell can be very protective. It can also be defensive and not allow for growth. What is there for you to explore beyond the superficial or concrete? What shells no longer serves you?

♫ *Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That’s how the light gets in*

by Leonard Cohen



World of Yetzirah (Emotion):

Fruit with a pit (it can also have a hard shell).

Before eating the fruit, reflect on how the pits in fruits are the regenerative process for new growth. When the fruit is ready to be eaten we say the blessing over fruit:

ברוך את הויה בורא פרי העץ

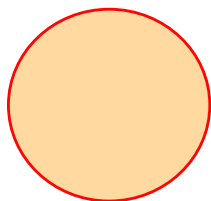
♫ *Bruchah at havayah boreh pri ha-eitz*

Blessed are you infinite presence gifting us with regenerative fruit.

📖 Second Reader reads this quote from Martin Luther King: “Normal fear protects us; abnormal fear paralyzes us. Normal fear motivates us to improve our individual and collective welfare; abnormal fear constantly poisons and distorts our inner lives. Our problem is not to be rid of fear but rather to harness and master it.”

For Discussion: One approach: As you uncover the pit ask: What is that pit in my stomach? How does fear hold me back from connecting with others, connecting with parts of myself that I have shied away from examining or expressing?

As second approach: What is a pit? The start for a new beginning, for new growth? Metaphorically, instead of throwing the pit away can I use what I fear for growth?



World of Briyah (Thought):

Fruit that has neither shell nor inedible pits or seeds.

Before eating the fruit, reflect on how the pits in fruits are the regenerative process for new growth. When the fruit is ready to be eaten we say the blessing over fruit:

ברוך את הויה בורא פרי העץ

♪ Bruchah at havayah boreh pri ha-eitz

Blessed are you infinite presence gifting us with regenerative fruit.

The Hebrew word for tree is Eitz עץ

The word Eitz is connected to the Hebrew Eitzah עצה meaning “advice.”

[The Hawaiian word for tree is kumulā'au which means “teacher”].

📖 Third Reader reads this story:

When Honi was a young man he was walking down a dirt path and saw an old man and his granddaughter planting a carob tree. “Old man,” said Honi, “Don’t you know that you will not live long enough to eat the fruit of this tree?” The old man nodded and answered, “Indeed I won’t. But my granddaughter will, and so will my granddaughter’s grandchildren.”

Honi wandered off and grew tired, resting under a nearby tree. When he woke up he noticed that he had a long white beard and that he was surrounded by carob trees. An old woman was picking carobs for her grandchild. He asked the old woman, “Is that your fruit tree?” “Yes,” she replied, “My grandfather planted it with me many years ago.” At that moment Honi really woke up!

Talmud Ta’anit 23a

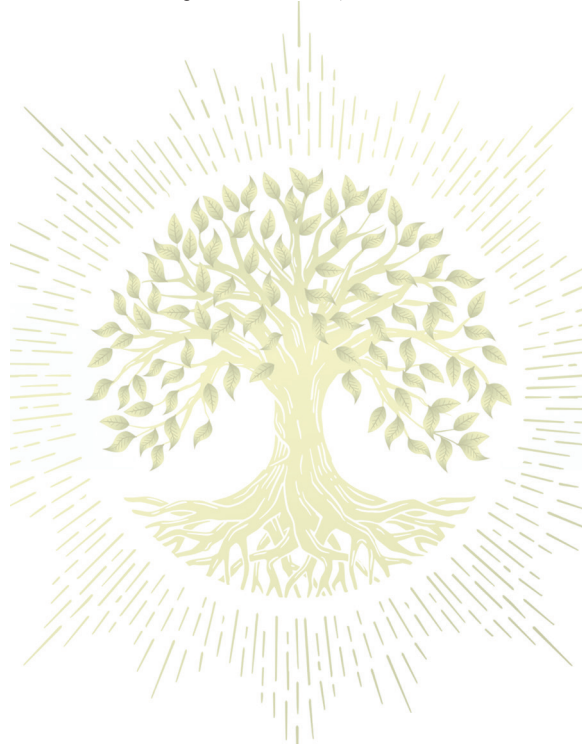
For Discussion: *When is the best time to plant a tree? (Answer: Twenty years ago.) When is the next best time? (Answer: Now.) ~ Chinese Proverb*

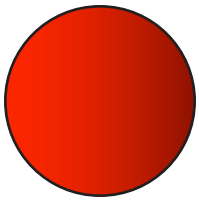
📖 Reader:

When God created the first man he took him and showed him all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to him, “See my works, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are. And everything that I created, I created for you. Be careful not to spoil or destroy my world—for if you do, there will be nobody after you to repair it.”

Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13

Please take a minute to reflect on the following question: What tree best symbolizes you as a person? As that tree, what advice do you have for yourself and others? (Share with those at your table).





World of Atzilut (Union):

Fruit juice (or fruit jam).

Please lift your cup and say together:

ברוך את הריה שהכל נהיה בדברו

♫ *Bruchah at havayah sheh-hakol Ne-heye bid-varo.*

Blessed are you infinite presence that all is generated through the word.

A song for Tamar (the date palm)

♫ Tzadik ka-Tamar Yifrach, ki-Erez ba-
Levanon Yisgeh Shitulum beVet Adonay,
be-Chatzrot Elohehun, Yafrichu. Ode
Yenuvun be-Sayva de-Shaynim
vera'ananim ye-Heyu...

The righteous flourish like a palm tree, fruitful and sweet, like a date palm...in old age they still produce fruit, full of freshness (Psalms 92:13).

📖 Fourth Reader reads this piece from Robin Wall Kimmerer,
Braiding Sweetgrass:

In a culture of gratitude, everyone knows that gifts will follow the circle of reciprocity and flow back to you again. This time you give and next time you receive. Both the honor of giving and the humility of receiving are necessary halves of the equation. A gift is different from something you buy. You never dishonor the gift. The gift asks something of you. To take care of it.

I don't know the origins of the giveaway, but I think we learned it from watching the plants, especially the berries who offer up their gifts all wrapped in red and blue. The gifts of the earth are to be shared, but the gifts are not limitless. The generosity of the earth is not an invitation to take it all. When berries spread out their giveaway blanket, offering their sweetness to birds and bears and boys alike, the transaction does not end there.

Something beyond gratitude is asked of us. The berries trust that we will uphold our end of the bargain and disperse their seeds to new places to grow. They remind us that all flourishing is mutual. We need the berries and the berries need us. Their gifts multiply by our care for them and dwindle from our neglect. We are bound in a covenant of reciprocity, a pact of mutual responsibility to sustain those who sustain us.

📖 Fifth Reader reads quote from Richard Powers, *The Overstory*:

Trees communicate over the air and through their roots. Trees take care of each other. Trees feed their young and synchronize their masts and bank resources and warn kin and send out signals. A forest knows things. Trees wire themselves up underground. There are brains down there, solving problems and making decisions. Link enough trees together and a forest grows aware.

*Grant me the ability to
go outdoors each day
and commune among
the trees and grass
among all growing things
and there may I enter into
prayer, to talk with the One.*



*May I express everything in my
heart and may all the foliage of
the field, 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
spirit of all growing things made
one by their transcendent Source.*

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov





♫ Da l'cha shekol ro'eh ve ro'eh yeish lo nigun m'yuchad mishelo.

Da l'cha shekol eisev v'eisev yeish lo shirah m'yuchedet mishelo.

U-may-shirat ha'asavim na'aseh nigun shel ro'eh.

Kamah yafeh, kama yafeh vena'eh k'she-shomim hashirah shelahem.

Tov me'od l'hitpaleil bay-nay-hem Uv'simchah la-avod et Hashem.

U-may shirat ha'asavim mitmalei haleiv U-mish-tokeik.

U-keshehaleiv, min hashirah mitmalei U-mishto-keik el eretz yisra'el.

Or gadol azai nimshakh v'hoelaych mikdushatah shel ha'aretz aylav.

U-may-shirat ha'asavim, na'aseh nigun shel ha-leiv.

Know that each and every shepherd has his own tune.

Know that each and every grass has its own song.

And from the song of the grasses the tune of the shepherd is made

How beautiful, how beautiful and pleasant to hear their song.

It's very good to pray among them and to serve Hashem in joy

And from the song of the grasses the heart is filled and yearns.

And when the heart is filled by the song and yearns for the Land of Israel

a great light is drawn forth and goes from the Land's holiness unto it.

And from the song of the grasses the tune of the heart is made.

Rebbe Nachman's Song of the Grasses by Naomi Shemer

As others planted long before us, so may we plant for those who will follow.

Let us honor Tu B'Shevat by treasuring our Earth, enjoying its yield, concern for its wellbeing.

Let us honor Tu B'Shevat, the New Year of Trees, by striving for harmony with the world around us.



Alan Sugarman

We have completed the Tu B'Shevat Seder with all its symbolic foods. Let us merit that we can enjoy the fruits of our land and the fruits of our labor and all say together – *Next year we gather in the Garden of Eden.*

We all sing: **♪ *L' Shana Haba'ah b'Gan Eden B'Shalva***

Next year we gather in the tranquility of the Garden of Eden.

Please travel home safely





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