

SOME TEXTS YOU CAN USE TO SWEETEN YOUR Tu Bish'vat SEDER

In the time that the Holy One created the first human, he took him to all the trees of Gan Eden and said to him, 'See my works, how lovely and praiseworthy they are, and all that I created, for your sake I created it. Put your mind [to this], that you don't ruin or destroy my world, for if you ruin there is no one who will repair after you.' *Kohelet Rabbah* on Eccl. 7:13

What is the Tree of Life?

1) The Tree of Life supports the Whole Cosmos

I am the one that planted this tree, for all the world to delight in; and I hammered out all with him, and I called his name "all/*hakol*", for all depends on him, and all comes out from him. And all are needing him, and to him they look forward and on him they wait. And from there blossom the souls in joy. Even in the time that I hammered out my earth...I planted and rooted this tree in her, and I rejoiced in them. *Bahir*, sec.22

2) The Tree of Life is the Holy One

And what is the tree? The powers of the Holy One, this one on back of this, and they resemble a tree, in that this tree, by means of the waters, brings out fruit. And what are these waters? They are wisdom, and they are the souls of the righteous that blossom/grow from the spring...by means of Israel, for when they are righteous and good, Shekhinah rests between them and she rests in the bosom of the Holy One, and fructifies them and increases them." *Bahir*, sec.119

3) The Tree of Life is YHVH

The name of YHVH, blessed be, is the pillar of all the Sefirot; upper and lower are holding on to this name and through it they receive flow, from above to below, and this is the name standing like the image of the body of the tree, and all the rest of the holy names are like an image of the branches of the tree, and they are all holding onto him, all the creatures above and below, and [this name] is called in the words of *Chazal* [the rabbis] "*Maqom/Place*" for he is the place of the world. *'Eden Miqedem, Ot Chet*, p.118

4) Know that all the Holy Names are tied to YHVH...The four-letter name is like the trunk of a tree, and the name *Ehyeh* is like the root that nurtures the branches which are the other Names of God, and each one of these branches bears a different fruit. *Gates of Light, Gikatilla*, (adapted from Weinstein ed., p.6)

Rabbi David Mevorach Seidenberg, © 2003, 2004, rebduvid86@hotmail.com

This one, your body, was like a palm tree, and your breasts clusters [of dates]. I said, I will climb up that palm tree, I will grab its branches. May your breasts be like clusters [of grapes] on the vine, the scent of your breathing like apples. And the inside of your mouth like good wine, going straight to my lover, lubricating sleepers' lips. I am my lover's, and his desire is upon me. *Song of Songs* 7:8-11

The Mystery of Trees

8) The Trees Speak

"*Kol si'ach hasadeh/And every growth of the field*" [Gen 2:—All the trees are as it were conversing/*m'sichin*, these with these, and with the creatures/*'im hab'riyot*. And...all the conversations of the creatures are about nothing except the land... *Genesis Rabbah* 13:1

9) The Waters Respond

If different trees' roots reach different depths, then how are they all watered equally? The upper abyss calls to the lower and says: Rise up and I will come down; and the lower abyss says: Come down and I will rise up. *Exodus Rabbah* 5:9

10) Mysteries of Fruit

R' Yishma'el said: The mercy of the Place/*Maqom* (God) is on the fruit of the tree...For if scripture cautions you [not to harm] the tree that makes fruit, all the more so the fruits themselves. *Sifrey Deuteronomy* on Deut. 20:19, *Pisqa* 203

11) When R' Abba saw a tree whose fruit turned into a bird and flew away, he wept and said: If men only knew to what these things alluded, they would rend their garments! *Zohar* 2:15b

12) Divine Wisdom Hidden in the Trees

R' Y'hudah said: Why is it written, "God/*Elohim* made this one corresponding to this one"? [Ec 7:14] Just like the pattern of the firmament, the Holy One made [everything] in the earth, and all of it alludes to what is above. It's like what R' Yosi said: These trees through which wisdom is shown, like the carob, the palm, the pistachio, all were a single construction. And those that make fruit, except apples, are a single mystery...And those trees that do not bear fruit, from one breast they suck, except the willows of the brook, which have a mystery of their own. And every one of those that are small, except the hyssop, from one mother they are born. All the plants in the earth, each one is a singular mystery like the pattern above. *Zohar* 2:15b-16a

Kabbalistic Texts on the Deepest Mystery

5) The Shekhinah's arms, and YOUR BODY

[The arms of the Shekhinah are] in the name YHVH, like the shape that is in the palm *Y*, in the five fingers *H*, in her arm *V* and in her shoulder *H*. In her shoulder [joint] are formed so many lines, like the branches of the tree of life...That's what's written: "A tree of life she is to those holding her, and her supporters are made happy." *Tiqney Zohar* 146a

6) God's Image is the Tree (Kabbalistic math!):

The kabbalists refer to the extension of the worlds as a tree. And this tree is the true Tree of Life, the soul of all life. The Name YHVH is alluded to in the word tree/*eits* when certain mathematical operations are performed. How so? [$Y \times H + H \times Y = 100$, $V \times H + H \times V = 60$], thus the total is the value of *eits* [because the letters *Ayin* and *Tsadi* which spell tree are 70+90, which also equals 160]. Concerning this, there is an allusion in the verse, "Is there a tree in it or not?" [Num 14:10] In other words, determine if God's providence is in it or not, [as if the verse had said], "Is YHVH in its midst, or not?" Now the Torah is also called *eits*. And beloved is the human being, who was created *b'tselem*/in God's image, which has the same value [because the letters *Ts+L+M* are 90+30+40 which also equals 160]. *Generations of Man*, Isaiah Horowitz, pp.111-112

7) YHVH is the Shekhinah is the Tree (Kabbalistic anagrams!):

The praise of the body/*guf*: "This body/*qomah* of yours is likened/*damtah* to a date palm/*tamar*" [Song 7:8] and the one that knows the measure of the body/*qomah* of [the *tamar* and of God] inherits the coming world. For this *tamar* is the letter *V* [because *Vav* is simply a straight line, like a palm tree's trunk]. About him it says, "YHVH is the purifying pool of Israel/*miqveh yisrael*". *Miqveh* [*MQVH*] is her *qomah* [*QVMH*] which is her measure. This is the righteous one/*tsadiq*, about whom it says, "*Tsadiq* like a date palm will blossom." [Ps 92:13] *Tiqney Zohar* 146a

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?

The ecological crisis threatens our health, our children's future,

If I am only for myself, what am I?

*the well-being of all of God's children, the survival of
multitudes of species, the very integrity of Creation.*

If not now, WHEN?

from *The Trees Are Davening*, on coejl.org, shalomctr.org

13) Divine Wisdom in the Earth—Earth Gives Birth

R' B'rakhyah said in the name of R' Shimon ben Lakish: Whatever the Holy One created in the human, he created in the earth/*arets* as a model for him. A person has a head and so does the earth, as it's said, "and the head of the earth/*`afar* of the world" [Pr 8:26]...Just as the woman gives birth so does the land, as it's said, "Has the earth labored for a single day, even birthing a nation in a moment?" *Kohelet Rabbah* to Ec 1:4

14) The Radiance of the Earth—Returning Light

The essence and nature of the light of the infinite/*Eyn Sof* ...encompasses all worlds equally [as it says]: "And I fill the heavens and the earth", and "There is no place void of Him"—even in this physical world...Furthermore, the radiance of the radiance of this radiance manifests its power and ability in the element of the physical earth/*`afar* in an immense manifestation, in more enormous strength than elements transcending it, even the hosts of heaven. For they do not have it in their power and ability constantly to bring forth something from nothing, like the element of earth, which constantly grows something from nothing—these are the plants and trees—from the power it possesses, which is *Ayin*/no-thing and spiritual...This is the constant and everlasting effect, throughout the earth, of the command "Let the earth bring forth plants", and not only during the six days of creation...For during the seven days of the beginning there shone in this world a radiance from the light of the *Eyn Sof* in pure kindness, making plants and trees and fruits grow from nothing to something, constantly from year to year...[By means of these] the living [animal] is nurtured and lives by the growing [plants], and the speaking [human] receives vitality from both, even wisdom and knowledge. *Igeret Haqodesh* 20 in *Tanya*, Shneur Zalman (the Alter Rebbe), from pp.507-509

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15) R' Abba taught: There is no greater revealing of redemption than that which the verse states: "And you, mountains of Israel, you shall give forth your branches and you shall bear your fruit for my people Israel, for they shall soon come." [Ez. 36:8] *Talmud Sanhedrin* 98a

16) [The Holy One] is destined to make the face of the heavens new, like the face of the sun, and the face of the earth new like the face of the moon, and the face of the fruit trees like the face of the stars, and the face of the fruits of the fruits of the ground like the face of the constellations, and make sweet their scent like the scent of *Gan Eden*. Each tree will reach fantastic proportions, every vine, every fig, every olive, every date, every apple, every nut. Each and every tree is destined to put forth fruit in the time-to-come, as it's said, "And the land will give her produce and the tree of the field will give his fruit." *Midrash Alpha Beta, Batey Midrashot*, p.430

17) The Forest Sings Out Along With the Cosmos

The skies will rejoice, and the land sing forth; the sea and what fills him will shout out;

Yism'chu hashamayim, v'tagayl ha'arets, yiram hayam um'lo'o'

The field will exult and all in him; then all the trees of the forest will sing out!

Ya'aloz sadai v'khol asher bo az y'ran'nu kol `atsay ya`ar!
Ps. 96:11-12

18) A Hymn to the Cosmos as God's Form

From [the Holy One's] form/*to'ar* the constellations are shimmering, and God's form projects the exalted ones. And His [Her] crown blazes out the mighty, and His garment flows with the precious.

And all the trees will rejoice in the word, and the plants will exult in His rejoicing, and His words shall drop as perfumes, flowing forth flames of fire, giving joy to those who search them, and quiet to those who fulfill them.

Heykhalot Rabbati 24:3 in *Jewish Gnosticism*, Scholem

Pardes I

Four entered the orchard/*pardes* (Paradise)—Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Aher and Rabbi Akiva. Ben Azzai looked and died. Ben Zoma looked and lost his mind. Aher cut off the saplings. R' Akiva entered in peace and came out in peace. *Talmud Chagigah* 14b

@hotmail.com

Four Worlds

Walnuts – Asiyah

"I went down to the nut garden..." With the walnut/*egoz*, you take one from the pile, and all of them scatter and roll, one after the other. So too with Israel: strike one of them, and all of them feel it. *Song of Songs Rabbah* 6:11

Likewise, when a single species is endangered, the entire ecosystem is shaken and affected. The Trees Are Davening

Olives – Y'tsirah

"And the dove came in [to the ark] at evening, and here, an olive leaf torn off in her mouth." [Gn 8:9] From where did she bring it? R' Bibi said: The gates of *Gan Eden* were opened for her. R' Abahu said: If she brought it from the garden of Eden, wouldn't she bring something special, cinnamon or balsam? But she hinted and said to Noah: Better is bitterness from this and not sweetness from beneath your hand. *Genesis Rabbah*, 33:6

Figs – B'riyah

R' Yochanan said: Why is it written, "The one who guards a fig-tree will eat its fruit"? [Prov. 27:18] In what way are words of Torah compared to a fig? With a fig-tree, whenever a person searches her, he finds [ripe] figs in her [because they don't ripen at once, but a little each day]. So too with words of Torah: whenever a person meditates upon them, he finds [new] meaning/*ta'am*. *Talmud Eruvin* 54a-b

Cedars – Atsilut

R' Yochanan said: The world was not worthy to make use of the cedars, for they were not created except for the needs of the *beyt hamiqdash*/Temple. *Genesis Rabbah* 15:1

For one hundred and twenty years Noah planted cedars and cut them down [in order to build the ark without cutting down any existing trees]. *Genesis Rabbah* 30:7

Pardes II – Don't let the light break up (go out)!

The 4 letters of the word *pardes*—*PRDS*—stand for the 4 ways of interpreting Torah. These are *P'shat*—literal interpretation, *Remez*—allusion and parable, *D'rash*—exegesis, and *Sod*—mystical interpretation. If we remove *Sod*, we are left with *PRD*, the root of *nifrad*, which means separate or detached. Torah without *Sod*, its mystical dimension, is like a fruit separated from the Tree. from www.spiral.org.za