



**Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life**

## **A TU B'SHVAT HAGGADAH FOR SHABBAT**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

*Reader:* 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." (Deut. 14:22-23) Today we celebrate Tu B'Shvat also for renewal of our commitment to serve and protect the trees, and all of God's creation.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish mystics in the city of Tsfat in northern Israel developed a seder, like the Passover seder, to celebrate Tu B'Shvat. This seder, like the Passover seder, is divided into four parts. This represents the four worlds of the mystics and the four seasons. As in the Passover seder, we will 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 many types of fruits and nuts, with special significance for the first three of the four worlds. According to the mystical tradition, the Kabbalah, the four worlds are: Assiyah (action - our world of physical reality), Y'tzirah (formation), B'riah (creation), and Atzilut (emanation).

### **THE FIRST WORLD:**

#### ***OLAM HA-ASSIYAH - THE WORLD OF ACTION***

*Reader:* Assiyah - the first world, is the world of action. It is the world in which we assemble and shape artifacts. 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.

**Together:** We crack the shells of the nuts and release the divine sparks for Tikkun Olam, healing of the world. We crack the shells of our own preoccupation and our own pain.

### **B'RACHOT/ BLESSINGS:**

**Together:** On Shabbat, we begin our meal by reciting the Kiddush, the sanctification of this day of rest. On this Tu B'Shvat, as we drink the first cup of wine, a white wine, may we feel the sleep of the winter as it refuels our bodies and souls and prepares us for the lengthening of the days, and the rebirth of nature.

*(The full Shabbat evening or day Kiddush may be inserted here.)*

We praise You, Ado--nai our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.	Baruch ata Ado--nai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri hagafen.
---	--

*Because Tu B'Shvat is a special day, we recite the Shehecheyanu:*

We praise You, Ado--nai our God, Ruler of the universe for giving us life, for sustaining us and for enabling us to reach this season.	Baruch ata Ado--nai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, she-he-cheyanu ve-kiyemanu ve-higi-anu laz'man ha-zeh
--	--

*First course: choose five from the following: pomegranates, walnuts, almonds, coconuts, pine nuts, pistachios, chestnuts, hazelnuts, brazil nuts or pecans.*

**Reader:** The fruits eaten at this point are ones that have wholly inedible shells or peels. The kabbalistic idea was that they correspond to the thick veil (that seems so impenetrable) with which God protects and cloaks the spiritual elements in this world. The shell or peel can also be seen as protection for the spirit, just as the body serves as a covering of the soul.

**Together:** 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.

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

## Environmental Conduct In the World of Action

**Reader:** "When you besiege a city many days to bring it into your power by making war against it, you shall not destroy the trees thereof by swinging an axe against them; from them you may eat but you may not destroy them; for is the tree of the field human to withdraw before you?" (Deut. 20:19-20).

This prohibition serves as the foundation for an important principle of Jewish law: B'AL TASHCHIT - the needless destruction of anything is wrong.

"This text becomes the most comprehensive warning to human beings not to misuse the position which God has given them as masters of the world and its matter by capricious, passionate or merely thoughtless wasteful destruction of anything on earth. Only for wise use has God laid the world at our feet..." (S.R. Hirsh, 19th century).

### SONG

The world stands on three things: on Torah, on worship, and on acts of loving kindness.	Al sh'losa d'varim (2x) Al shlosa, shlosa d'varim Ha-olam (2x) omeid Al haTorah (2x), v'al ha'avodah V'al g'milut chasadim
--	--

## THE SECOND WORLD:

### *OLAM HA'YETZIRAH - THE WORLD OF FORMATION*

**Reader:** Yetzirah, the second world, 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.

Choose at least five from among the following fruits: olives, dates, cherries, hackberries, jujubes, persimmons, apricots, peaches, loquats and plums.

### **B'RACHOT/ BLESSINGS:**

**Together:** As we eat the fruit of Y'tzirah, 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, Ado--nai our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the tree.	Baruch ata Ado--nai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz
---	---

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

We praise You, Ado--nai our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.	Baruch ata Ado--nai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri hagafen.
---	--

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

### **The Formation of Environmental Ethics**

**Reader:** 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 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.

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)

## SONG

EILI EILI Oh Lord, my God, I pray that these never end: the sand and the sea. The rush of the waters, the crash of the heavens, the prayer of the heart	Eili Eili shelo yigameir l'olam, Hachol vehayam Rishrush shel hamayim, B'rak hashamayim, T'filat ha-adam
--	--

*(If you are having a main course, this might be a good time to break to serve it.)*

## THE THIRD WORLD:

### *OLAM HAB'RIYAH - THE WORLD OF CREATION*

**Reader:** B'riyah, the third world, is the world of Creation. Shabbat, which itself is a celebration of Creation, is central to the Torah's insights and instructions concerning the Earth and its protection. The intent of the prohibitions and obligations involved in observing Shabbat, according to many rabbinic sources, is to take us away from our weekday preoccupation with changing and leaving our mark on the world, to withdraw from acquiring and impacting, in order that we may reflect and recognize the beauty and integrity of Creation.

*Shabbat* is called "a foretaste of the World to Come," during which we accept and respect the world as it is, rather than trying to build or destroy elements within it. The Ten Commandments instructs us that not only people but animals must share in the Sabbath rest. The *shmitta* year, the seventh year on which Jews in the Land of Israel are directed not to plant or harvest but to allow the land to lie fallow to renew itself, and to allow the poor to partake freely of the crops, is called '*Shabbat ha'aretz*' – the Land's Sabbath.

In Genesis we read that "The Eternal formed a human from the dust of the Earth. God 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) Judaism instructs us to cultivate for our human needs in a manner that does not deplete and degrade Creation, but rather allows all life to flourish.

In this third 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. The fruits eaten at this stage are ones that are entirely edible. The kabbalists implied that since God-energy is so evident at this stage, there is no need to protect or conceal the Divine spirit. Or maybe the barriers of the spiritual and the physical are blurred, just as in these fruits the seeds are interspersed, spreading the Divine spark throughout while it is still possible to eat the seeds. In eating the entire fruit we are absorbing complete holiness into our bodies, without any physical covering or veil.

*Choose from five of the following: strawberry, figs, apples, raisins, grapes, carobs, pears, quince, mango, berries.*

### **B'RACHOT / BLESSINGS:**

**Together:** 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.

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

**Reader:** 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.

We praise You, Ado--nai our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.	Baruch ata Ado--nai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri hagafen.
---	--

### **Environmental Responsibility in the World of Creation**

**Reader:** 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 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."

### **SONG**

ESAH EINAI - PSALM 121  I lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where will my help come? My help comes from the Eternal Maker of heaven and earth	Esah einai el he-harim Mei -ayin, mei- ayin ya-avo ezri (2x) Ezri me-im Hashem Oseh shamayim va-aretz (2x)
---	--

## THE FOURTH WORLD:

### *OLAM HA'ATZILUT - THE WORLD OF EMANATION*

**Reader:** 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.

### **B'RACHAH/ BLESSING:**

**Together:** 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, Ado--nai our God, Ruler of the universe who creates the fruit of the vine.	Baruch ata Ado--nai Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri hagafen.
---	--

**Together:** 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.

---

*Drawn from materials developed by Dr. Barak Gale; Dr. Ami Goodman (Congregation Beth Sholom, San Francisco); Yigal Deutscher, Rachel Kaplan, and Nigel Savage (Hazon - [www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org)); and Jonathan Wolf.*