

I am indebted to the following sources which served as models and supplied ideas and materials for this Haggadah Shel Tu b'Shvat.

Goldman, Solomon, Haggadah Shel Tu B'shevat. Department of Education, Jewish National Fund, Sh'vat, 5742.

Hefter, Seymour, Tu B'shvat Haggadah. Jewish Community Center of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania (60 So. River St., 18701), Third Edition, November, 1975.

Waskow, Arthur, Seasons of Our Joy. Bantam, NY, 1982

הַאֲגָדָה

לְתוֹבֵי שְׁבַט

Haggadah

for

Tu b'Shvat

prepared by



Rabbi Mark Hurvitz

תָּרַם מֵאֲרוֹן מֵאִיר בֵּן צְדָקָה וְחַיִּיתָה הַלְלֵי הַיְרֵוּחַיִן
(first "edition" February 10, 1987)

January 15, 2002

בְּשָׂבַט תַּעֲסִי"ב

The Holy One led Adam through the Garden of Eden and said: "I created all my beautiful and glorious works for your sake. Take heed not to corrupt and destroy My world." (source unknown)

May it be your will, our God and God of our ancestors, that our blessing and eating of the fruits this day, inspire in us a deeper sensitivity to nature's gifts.

May the day soon come when the trees of Israel will renew themselves by blossoming and growing, and that we will see the living globe of our earth as a comfortable home for all Your creatures.

פְּרוּךְ אֶתְּהָרָה יִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלִיךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Blessed are You Living-Breathing-Presence-Within-the-
Universe our God, Sovereign of all space and time, who enables
us to bring out the juice from the fruit of the vine.

[All drink the fourth cup of wine/grape juice.]

Artza alinu: K'var kharashinu, v'gan zara'nu; Acol od lo katzarnu.

*We have gone up to the land; we have plowed and sown, but we
have not yet harvested.*

Once upon a time the trees decided to anoint one of
themselves king. They said to the olive tree:

Reign over us.

The olive tree said to them,

“Should I leave my oil, with which God and the world are
honored, to rule over the trees?”

Then the trees said to the fig tree:

Come you, and reign over us.

But the fig tree answered,

“Should I forsake my sweetness and my good fruit, to wear
out myself ruling over the trees?”

Then the trees said to the vine:

Come and reign over us.

But the vine answered,

“Should I leave my wine, which cheers God and all the world
to hold sway over the trees?”

Then all the trees said to the bramble:

Come you, and rule over us.

And the bramble answered,

“If in truth you anoint me king over you, then you must come
and take refuge in my shade, or else a fire will come out of
the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.”

(Judges 9:8-15)

Human life springs from the tree.

(source unknown)

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:

*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
b'Shvat *ראש השנה לאילנות* (*Rosh haShannah la Eilanol*) marks the
awakening of nature after its winter slumber.

**עֵצֵי-חַיִּים הֵינּוּ וְהִמְכִּינָה מְאֹדָּה. דְּרָכֶיהָ דְרָכֵי-נֵעָם,
וְכָל-דְּמִתֵּיכֹחֶיהָ עֵלִוִּים.**

Eitz-chaim hi lamachazikim bah, v'tomchehah m'ushar.

D'racheihah darchei-no'am, v'chol-n'tivotehah shalom.
(Proverbs 3:17-18)

Just as Torah is a tree of life to those who hold fast, living
trees are models for how we nurture our lives so that they
become pathways of pleasantness and peace. As we celebrate
this Seder, we renew our awareness of how trees are
metaphors for our lives.

As we stand before God on Rosh haShannah to be judged, so
are trees judged on Tu b'Shvat.

On the fifteenth of Shvat
When spring comes,
An angel descends, ledger in hand,
And enters each bud, each twig, each tree
and all our garden flowers.
From town to town, from village to village
he makes his winged way.
Searching the valleys, inspecting the hills,
Flying over the desert
And returns to heaven.
And when the ledger will be full
Of trees and blossoms and shrubs,
When the desert is turned into a meadow
And all our land is a watered garden,
The Messiah will appear.

(S. Shalom, "The Fifteenth of Shvat")

[Fill first cup with all white wine/grape juice.]

The first cup we drink is white — without color. 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.

פְּרוּחַ אֶתְמָה יִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶכֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Blessed are You Living-Breathing-Presence-Within-the-
Universe our God, Sovereign of all space and time, who enables
us to bring out the juice from the fruit of the vine.

[All drink the first cup of wine/grape juice.]

The first kind of fruit we eat has an outer inedible shell — the almond. In Israel, the almond tree שקדיה (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.

I stand on slenderness all fresh and fair,
I feel root firmness in the earth far down,
I catch the wind and loose my scent for bees
That sack my throat for kisses and suck love.
What is the wind that brings my body over?
Wine, I am beautiful and sick. I long for rain that
Strikes and bites like cold and hurts.
Be angry, rain, for dew is kind to me
When I am cool from sleep and take my bath.

Who softens the sweet earth about my feet,
Touches my face so often and brings water?
Where does she go, taller than any sunflower
Over the grass like birds? Has she a root?
These are great animals that kneel to us,
Sent by the sun perhaps to help us grow.
I have seen death. The colors when away,
The petals grasped at nothing and curled tight.
Then the whole head fell off and left the sky.

She tended me and held me by my stalk.
Yesterday I was well, and then the gleam,
The thing sharper than frost cut me in half.
I fainted and was lifted high. I feel
Waist-deep in rain. My face is dry and drawn.
My beauty leaks into the glass like rain.
When first I opened to the sun I thought
My colors would be parched. Where are my bees?
Must I die now? Is this a part of life?

(Karl Shapiro, "A Cut Flower")

[Fill the forth cup with red wine/grape juice.]

Our drink is completely red. In its richness we sense the full glow of summer. The crops will grow and the flowers will bloom. We are about to leave our gathering to where the reality of winter's cold still cuts at our skins. As the drink and the seasons warm us, may we be reminded that our time of joy has not yet come.

פְּרוּךְ אֱתָהּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶךְ הַעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגִּזְיוֹן.

Blessed are You Living-Breathing-Presence-Within-the-
Universe our God, Sovereign of all space and time, who enables
us to bring out the juice from the fruit of the vine.

[All drink the third cup of wine/grape juice.]

Our friends become dear. We can drop our defenses and open
our hearts. Like the fig's fruit which is entirely edible, both
freshly picked as well as thoroughly aged. Our actions
become love as we share our joys and sorrows, our hopes,
dreams and fears. Now, together we can raise a future.

Every fruit has in it something inedible; dates have pits,
grapes have seeds, pomegranates have skin. But every part of
the fig is good to eat. So it is also with Torah.

(Yalkut Shimoni Joshua 1)

פְּרוּךְ אֱתָהּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶךְ הַעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַעֵץ.

Blessed are You Living-Breathing-Presence-Within-the-
Universe our God, Sovereign of all space and time, who enables
us to harvest the fruit of the tree.

[All eat the figs.]

The tender roots of the fig split the hard rock of the crag.

(source unknown)

**וְיִשְׁבוּ אִישׁ תַּחַת גִּפְנוֹ וְתַחַת תְּאֵנָתוֹ וְאִין מְחַרְרִיד כִּי-כִי יִהְיֶה
צִבְאוֹת דָּבַר**

But everyone shall sit under their vine and fig trees and
none shall make them afraid; for Adonai Tzeva'ot has
spoken.

(Michah 4:4)

**לְכֶה דְלוּרֵי נִצָּא הַשְּׂדֵה גְלִינָה כְּפִפְרֵיָם וְשִׁפְיָמָה לְפָרְמִים נְרָאָה אֵם
פְּרוּחָה הַגִּזְיוֹן פִּתַח הַסְּמֶדֶר הַנִּצָּו הַרְמוֹנוֹיִם שָׁם אֶתֵּן אֶת-דְּלוּרֵי לָךְ**

Come my beloved, let us go into the field; let us stay in the
villages; let us go early to the vineyards, to see whether the
grapevine has budded, whether the vine blossoms have
opened, if the pomegranates are in flower.

(Song of songs 7:12,13)

פְּרוּךְ אֱתָהּ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶךְ הַעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַעֵץ.

Blessed are You Living-Breathing-Presence-Within-the-
Universe our God, Sovereign of all space and time, who enables
us to harvest the fruit of the trees.

[All eat the almonds.]

Once, while the sage Honi was walking along a road, he saw
a man planting a carob tree. Honi asked him: "How many
years will it require for this tree to give fruit?" The man
answered that it would require seventy years. Honi asked,
"Are you so healthy a man that you expect to live that length
of time and eat of its fruit?" The man answered, "I found a
fruitful world because my ancestors planted for me. So will I
do for my children."

(Ta'anit 23)

*For Adonai your God brings you into a good land of brooks, of
water, of fountains and springs flourishing in valleys and hills; a
land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees and
pomegranates; a land of olive trees and honey.*

(Deuteronomy 8:6-8)

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai used to say: "If you should have
a sapling in your hand and be suddenly told that the Messiah
has come, plant the sapling first and afterwards go to
welcome the Messiah."

(Ta'anit 5)

*I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;
a tree that looks at God all day
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.*

(Joyce Kilmer, "Trees")

[Fill the second cup with white wine/grape juice mixed with a few drops of red.]

This cup we drink is white — but tinged with red. The sun's rays shine upon our earth and thaw the frozen ground. In Israel pink and white flowers now dot the hills and mountains. We see in our cups the hint of springtime and the earth's reawakening.

פְּרוּךְ אֶתְמָה יִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Blessed are You Living-Breathing-Presence-Within-the-
Universe our God, Sovereign of all space and time, who enables
us to bring out the juice from the fruit of the vine.

[All drink the second cup of wine/grape juice.]

The warmth of our world spreads into our lives. At work and away we make friends. We are ready to share ourselves with our neighbors, but only to a point. Like the date, we offer our outer being, as we protect the intimacy of our hearts.

When Scripture speaks of “a land flowing with milk and honey,” it refers to the honey from the date palm, the *tamar* (*tamar*). The tamar is one of those trees which abound in blessing, for every part of it can be used by humans. For this reason our rabbis compare the people of Israel to this tree.

Israel is like a date palm, of which none is wasted; its dates are for eating, its lulavim are for blessing; its fronds are for thatching; its fibers are for ropes; its webbing for sieves; its thick trunks for building — so it is with Israel, which contains no waste.

(Bereshit Rabbah 41)

פְּרוּךְ אֶתְמָה יִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ.

Blessed are You Living-Breathing-Presence-Within-the-
Universe our God, Sovereign of all space and time, who enables
us to harvest the fruit of the trees.

[All eat the dates.]

צְדִיק פִּתְמָמָר יִפְרָח פֶּאֶרָה פְּלוֹבְנוֹן יִשְׁעָה שְׂתוּלִים פְּבִית יְהוָה פְּתוֹרוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ

(Tzadik katamar yifracli k'erez ba L'vanon yisseli.
Sh'tulim b'sayt Adonai b'hatzrot Elohaynu yafreeklu.
Od y'nuvun b'sayvah, d'shaginun v'raananim yeeynu.
L' Hagid kee yashlar Adonai tzuri v'lo acalata bo.)

The righteous shall flourish like palms, grow tall like cedars in Lebanon. Rooted in the house of God they shall be ever fresh and green, proclaiming that God is just, my Rock, in whom there is no wrong.

(Psalm 92:13,14)

אֲרִיץ זָכַת חֲלֵל וְזָכַשׁ

(Eretz zarat halav u'densh)

This is a land of milk and honey.

Rabbi Isaac told the following parable:

A man was once wandering in the desert, hungry, thirsty and exhausted from the heat. He chanced upon a tree whose fruit was sweet, shadow was pleasant and had a brook flowing at its base. He ate the fruit, drank the water and rested in the shade. When he rose to leave, he addressed the tree:

Oh tree how can I bless you?

If I were to say “May your fruit be sweet,” see, it is already sweet. Were I to say “May your shade be pleasant” — it is already pleasant. And were I to say “May there be a brook at your feet” — the brook is already there. My blessing will therefore be:

May all your saplings be like you.

(Ta'anit 5)

[Fill the third cup with red wine/grape juice mixed with a few drops of white.]

Now our drink is red with but a hint of the winter's whiteness we now see passing. As spring arrives the earth becomes soft. The farmers turn the soil and place their seeds in its moist warmth.