

סדר תיקון  
ט"ו בשבט  
A Seder for  
Tu BiSh'vat

Temple Shalom  
Aberdeen, New Jersey  
Rosh Hodesh

**Excerpted and adapted from**

—Ari Davidow,  
ari@ivritype.com  
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This Hagaddah is dedicated to Tamar Kaufman.  
Feminist, journalist, and friend, Tamar died of brain cancer in late  
1994 (<http://www.well.com/user/ari/tamar/tamar.html>).

# Introduction

Why do we observe Tu BiSh'vat with a Seder?

The mystical sages of Safed in the 16th century understood God as a tree of life, whose roots were in the heavens, and whose branches extended toward earth, bringing all of us life and blessing.

The New Year of Trees was a holy time, an opportunity to partake of the fruit of the trees, and to thank God for the wonder of renewed life for the universe. They organized a "Seder for Tu BiSh'vat" at which they drank four cups of wine, and many different kinds of products from the Land of Israel.



In 1653 the first liturgy, a collection of readings and rituals for Tu BiSh'vat, was published in Salonica (Greece) under the name *Pri Etz Hadar* (Fruit of the Goodly/Citrus Tree).

Although the identity of the author is unknown, it is generally assumed to have been Haim Vital, a student and disciple of the Ari (Rabbi Isaac Luria), renowned kabbalist of Safed.

The basic concept behind the ritual is to increase the flow of God's emanations/blessings into the world. By eating the various kinds of fruits with the proper intention, we aid in the re-fruitification of our world from the divine Tree of Life.

In Salonica a legend concerning Tu BiSh'vat:

Some barren Jewish women, believing in the power of sympathetic magic, would plant raisins and candy near trees, or embrace trees on Tu BiSh'vat, at night, praying for fertility.

Young girls eligible for marriage were brought to trees where an imitation marriage was enacted. If, shortly after, buds were found on the tree to which they were 'married' they knew their turn would soon come.

In some areas the Tu BiSh'vat celebrations were held in the homes of families who had lost a beloved during the past year, to remind of the prohibition of mourning on that day, and also of the renewal of life from the trees being parallel to the resurrection.

In Persia there was a custom of climbing on the roof and lowering an empty basket through the chimney which would be returned laden with fruit. In Turkey there was a custom where each member of the family would have a special relationship with one species of fruit. In Persia and

Afghanistan, Jews on Tu BiSh'vat would purchase new fabrics from which clothing for Pesach would be sewn.

According to Kabbalah, there are four worlds or levels of creation: *azilut* (emanation), *beriah* (creation), *yetzirah* (formation), and *assiyah* (action—our world of physical reality).

The world of *azilut* is purely spiritual and cannot be symbolized in any concrete way. The world of *beriah* is symbolized by ten fruits that have neither pits on the inside nor shells on the outside—that is, they are totally edible:

grapes, figs, apples, etrogim (citrons), lemons, pears, raspberries, blueberries, carobs, and quinces. (Seeds are considered edible in this system.)

The world of *yetzirah* has pits inside, but the outside can be eaten. Its ten fruits are olives, dates, cherries, jujubes, persimmons, apricots, peaches, loquats, plums, and hackberries.

The world of *assiyah* has an outside shell that must be discarded and an inside that can be eaten. Its ten fruits and nuts are pomegranates, walnuts, almonds, pine nuts, chestnuts, hazelnuts, coconuts, Brazil nuts, pistachios, and pecans.

The symbolism, in brief, is as follows.

Those parts that can be eaten represent holiness, the inedible parts—that is, the pits—represent the impure, and the shells serve as protection for the fragile holiness inside. (from *The Jewish Holidays*, by Michael Strassfeld)

The categories of fruits may symbolize three kinds of interpersonal situations also.

Entering an unfriendly or anxiety-producing atmosphere, one is guarded, externally armored, as it were. The shell is on the outside, like the fruits of *assiyah*.

In friendlier surroundings, but superficial or entered with some reservations, there is more interpersonal contact and exchange, even some degree of affable sharing, but the very private self remains surrounded by the inner shell, like the fruits of *yetzirah*.

In certain special situations of deep trust and intimacy, however, the inner self is revealed and shared with another; at this moment of I–Thou there is no inner shell, like the fruits of *beriah*.

Song: Dodi Li Va'ani Lo ha-ro'eh,  
Bashoshanim Dodi Li  
Mi zot ola min hamidbar  
Mi zot ola min hamidbar  
Dodi Li Va'ani Lo ha-ro'eh,  
Bashoshanim Dodi Li

From Song of Songs

The Kabbalists of Safed used to drink four cups of wine, each one redder than its predecessor. So today, following this tradition, we drink our first cup which is white wine representing the winter season at its peak.

*Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam  
borai pree ha'gafen.*

Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Once when Rav Kook was walking in the fields, lost deep in thought, the young student with him inadvertently 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 that I never simply pluck a leaf or a blade of grass or any living thing unless I have to. Every part of the vegetable world is singing a song and breathing forth a secret of the divine mystery of the creation.” The words of Rav Kook penetrated deeply into the mind of the young student: For the first time he understood what it means to show compassion to all creatures.

—*Wisdom of the Jewish Mystics*, pp. 80

The Kabbalists also spoke of *tikkun olam*, the repair of the world. We live in a time when the natural world, too, needs repair.

Our situation as a species is the following: the life-support systems of this almost impossibly beautiful planet are being violated and degraded, resulting in damage that is often irreparable, yet only a small proportion of humans have engaged their consciousness with this crisis.

In our own country, our farms are losing four billion tons of topsoil a year; the groundwater and soil are being poisoned by pesticide run-off and toxic dumping; the groundwater table itself, accumulated over thousands of years, is being recklessly depleted to serve the profits of agribusiness and developers; the nuclear power industry has generated much more than enough plutonium to poison every creature and ecosystem on Earth and has no idea how to store it safely; we're losing 200,000 to 300,000 acres of wetland habitat every year; and the songbirds, which used to herald the coming of spring, are now perishing in large numbers every winter when they migrate to the devastated land in Central and South America that formerly was majestic tropical rain forest.

—Charlene Spretnak

Song: In a round  
This pretty planet, spinning through space  
You're a garden, You're a harbor, You're a holy place

Golden Sun going Down, Gentle blue giant, spin us around  
All through the night, safe through the morning light

Following the tradition of Rabbi Isaac Luria, the Kabbalists in their *Tikkun Tu BiSh'vat* divided the fruits to be consumed into three groupings according to the three levels of physical creation. The simplest level, *Olam Ha'asiyah*, is that in which we assemble and shape artifacts without changing the form of the raw material. An example would be the construction of a wooden table. This lowest level was considered to be the most vulnerable and in need of protection. It was symbolized by those vulnerable fruits which possess an outer protective covering, usually peeled off and discarded. It is fruits of this category which we eat now.

***Baruch Atah Adonia, Eloheinu meleh ha-olam, Borai pree ha'etz***

**Oranges are eaten**

**ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם  
בורא פרי העץ**

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a *good* Land  
a Land of brooks of water of fountains and depths springing forth in valleys and hills  
a Land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates  
a Land of olive trees and honey  
a Land wherein you shall eat bread without scarceness,  
a Land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you may dig brass  
And you shall eat and be satisfied, and bless the Lord your *God*  
for the *good* Land which is being given unto you.  
—Deuteronomy 8:7–11

***Eretz zavat chalav, chalav u-d'vash***

***Eretz zavat chalav, chalav u-d'vash***

***A land flowing with milk and honey.***

## Yetzirah

The world of water

*Yetzirah* is the world of formation and birth. Water, the fluid element, gives shape to all matter. Our hearts are folded rivers; our bones are spiraling vortices; knots in trees are recycling eddies. From water, the heart, pours forth blessing and emotions. At this time we honor the watery ones: the phytoplankton who produce most of our oxygen, the sea creatures: dolphins, whales and seals subject to our unconscious wastefulness, the salmon whose lives are interrupted by dams....

*U-shav-tem mayim b'sasson.  
mee ma'ayanay ha-y'shu'a.*

And you shall draw water with gladness from the wells of salvation.

The righteous shall flourish like the (date) palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

—*Psalms 92:13*

***Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam  
borai pree ha'etz***

**ברוך אתה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם.  
בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ**

Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

*Dates are eaten*

Choni, the righteous man, was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree. He asked him, "how long does it take for this tree to bear fruit?" "In about 70 years," answered the man. "But you are so old, you will never taste its fruit." "You are right, but I have eaten the fruit of trees that have been planted before I was born. I plant for my daughters and sons, granddaughters and grandsons."

(Choni sat down to have a meal and sleep overcame him. As he slept, a rocky formation enclosed upon him which hid him from sight and he continued to sleep for seventy years.

When he awoke he saw a man gathering the fruit of the carob tree and he asked him, "are you the man who planted the tree?" The man replied, "I am his grandson." Thereupon

Choni exclaimed: "It is clear that I slept for seventy years."

—Talmud, *Ta'anit* 223a (Talmud)

For us, Judaism is the carob tree planted by others: our mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, and the many Jews who lived and developed our tradition. It is now for us to plant for ourselves by connecting and making traditions passed on to us our own. In addition, we plant for the future by adding our energy and creativity to Jewish life in its many forms and styles.

*Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam borai pree ha'etz.*

**ברוך אתה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ**

*Carob is eaten*

Our second cup of wine is white, but tinged with red. It symbolizes the beginnings of springtime and the earth's reawakening. In Israel, pink and white flowers dot the hills and mountains at this season of the year. As we drink the wine, let us think of one hope or wish we have for the coming spring.

*Barukh ata Adonai,*

*Eloheinu melekh ha-olam*

*borai pree ha'gafen.*

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן.**

Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

## Briyah

The world of air

The third level of creation was designated by the Kabbalists as *Olam HaBri'ah*. We eat the entire body of the fruit which represents this world. This fruit is both wholly soft so that it can be wholly taken in by us, and is yet wholly strong, structured so that it needs no outer hard shell nor inner hard pit: its special strength is present in its every portion.

In Arabic, the wind is "*ruh*," but the same word also means 'breath' and 'spirit.' In Jewish tradition, the word "*ruach*" has been broadened to include concepts of creation and divinity.

Without wind, most of Earth would be uninhabitable. But with the wind, Earth comes truly alive. Winds provide the circulatory and nervous systems of the planet, sharing out energy and information, distributing both warmth and awareness, making something out of nothing.

And what is there to life if man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of the pond, and the smell of the wind itself cleansed by a mid-day rain, or scented with pinyon pine. For all things share the same breath—the beasts, the trees, the man.

—*Chief Seattle*, 1855 (letter to President Pierce)

### *Nishmat Kol Khai T'varekh*

Our every breath we breathe could surely be a wonder.  
If we could only taste every sensation passing through us,  
taste every breath we pulled into our lungs,  
were we to refuse to allow any joy or pain brought to any of our senses  
to pass through us unexamined and unappraised,  
then every breath, every movement, every thought,  
every apprehension, every fear and every caress would be a prayer of awe.  
Let us feel it all, let us embrace it all, let us love it all even that which we hate.  
Then we would not only eat, we would taste,  
we would not only hear, we would listen,  
we would not only be awake, but be aware  
we would not only be standing, but be upstanding,  
then we would not only be released from prison, we would be free:  
Free to say our thanks, free to feel our love, free to feel our pain, free to struggle,  
free to submit, and free to inspire the breath of life infusing all matter,  
all energy in all time and space.  
When that breath is our breath, Then every breath will speak  
the secret holy name



## תהלים Chapter 150 Psalms

א יה-הללו:

ברקיע עזו, הללוהו; אל בקדשו-הללו

1 Hallelujah. (Praise God)

Praise God in God's sanctuary; praise God in the firmament of power.

ב ב' גדלו, הללוהו; הללוהו בגבור'תיו

2 Praise God for mighty acts; praise God for abundant greatness.

ג בנגבל וכנור, הללוהו; בתקוע שופר, הללוהו

3 Praise God with the blast of the horn; praise with lyre and harp.

ד במזימם ועגב, הללוהו; בת'ף ומחול, הללוהו

4 Praise God with the timbrel and dance; praise with stringed instruments and the pipe.

ה בצלצלי תרועה, הללוהו; ששמע-הללוהו בצלצלי

5 Praise God with the clear toned cymbals; praise with the clanging cymbals.

ו יה-הללו: כ'ל הנשמה

Halelu-El b'kadsho,

Haleluhu birki'a uzo

Haleluhu vig'vurotav,

Haleluhu k'rov gudol.

Haleluhu b'teka shofar,

Haleluhu b'nevel v'chinor

Haleluhu b'tof umachol,

Haleluhu b'minim v'ugav

Kol han'shama t'halel Yah - Haleluya

Kol han'shama t'halel Yah - Haleluya

6 Let all souls that have breath praise God.

Hallelujah!

Praise God, sun and moon

Praise God, all you stars of light

Praise God, heavens of heavens

and you waters that are above the heavens.

Let all praise the name of the Lord

Who commanded and they were created.

Praise God from the earth, O monsters and all deeps,

fire and hail, snow and vapor

storm wind fulfilling 'the word.'

Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees, and all cedars,  
beasts and all cattle; creeping things and winged birds,

kings of the earth, and all peoples

... Let them praise the Name of the Lord;

Whose name alone is exalted;

Whose majesty is glorified above the earth

and the heavens.

—from Psalm 148

The most widespread custom for the celebration of Tu BiSh'vat is the enjoyment of many different fruits, the number and combination of species varying widely among communities. Many observe the custom of eating 15 types in honor of the name of the day

Another popular practice is the maximizing of the number of fruits eaten:

We say (*shehechyanu*) over a new fruit—one which we have not eaten since at least last fall:

*Barukh ata Adonai,  
Eloheinu melekh ha-olam  
shehechyanu v'kiyuimanu  
v'higiyanu lazaman ha-zeh.*

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive, preserved us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

#### **Meditation on safety and courage**

*On seeing fruit trees blooming for the first time in the year*

*Lo yis'oo goy el goy cherev  
v'lo yilm'doon od milchama.*

Nation Shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore

*V'yashvu ish tachat gaf-no,  
v'tachat t'eynato,  
v i'eyn machrir.*

And all shall sit under their vine and fig trees,  
and none shall make them afraid

The fig is mentioned in the Bible sixteen times together with the vine as the most important fruit of Eretz Israel. The fig motif illustrates an era of peace and security in the past, and an ideal vision for the future.

—*Micah 4:3–4*

“The breath of life” ... of course that is *its* name. We breathe, and the trees breathe. We breathe in what the trees breathe out. So we breathe each other into existence: We, and the galaxies, and the arrays of science and the codes of law and the plays of music, we are breathing each other into existence.

And the breath, of course, goes in a cycle.

—Arthur Waskow, *Rainbow Sign*

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam,  
Borei pree ha'etz.

ברוך אתה יי אוהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי העץ  
**Figs are eaten**

We now lift our cups a third time with wine of crimson hue,  
representing the beginning of Spring with its promise of bountiful  
grain harvest

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי הגפן.

*Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha olam, Borei pree hagafen.*

Today, like every other day, we wake  
up empty and frightened.

Don't open the door to the study and  
begin reading.

Take down the dulcimer.

Let the beauty we love be what we do.

There are hundreds of ways to kneel  
and kiss the ground.

—Rumi, *Open Secret*

### **Atzilut**

The world of fire

There's a fire alive within  
every living cell of every being. The  
carbons we eat burn in the presence  
of the oxygen we breathe giving us  
the energy to be. This spark of  
light is our connection to the Divine.

The fourth Kabbalistic category of creation was spiritual and therefore  
Could not be represented by physical food  
*Olam Ha'atzilut* dealt with God's love, mercy, wisdom, and other essential  
and omnipresent realities which we perceive with our hearts  
rather than our five senses.

### **Eyts Chaim**

*Ayts chayim hee la-machazikim ba  
Ve'tomchay-ha me'u'shar.*

She is a tree of life to all who hold fast to her, and all of her  
supporters are happy.

Every part of the vegetable world  
is *singing* a song  
and bringing forth a secret  
of the divine mystery  
of the creation.  
—Rav Kook

No man is sterile. Every soul is pregnant with the seed of insight. It is vague and hidden. In some people the seed grows; in others it decays. Some give birth to life. Others miscarry it. Some know how to bear it, to nurse, to rear an insight that comes into being. Others do not....  
—Abraham Heschel

1. If you were unblocked by fear and in possession of all your powers, what would you do to heal our world?
  2. What specific projects could actually be accomplished through you in the next year's time?
  3. What strengths and resources do you have now that would help you do that?
  4. What will you need to learn or acquire?
  5. What obstacles are you likely to put in the way of fulfilling this goal?
  6. What can you do in the next 24 hours, no matter how small the step, that will help you reach that goal?
- Joanna Macy

We now fill our cups a fourth and final time with the wine red in color representing the ruling of Spring and the first hints of summer with its mature fruits whose blossoms were born on Tu BiSh'vat.

*Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam  
borai pree ha'gafen.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Blessed are You, Adonai, Source of all life. You create the fruit of the vine.

Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground.  
You cannot tell always by looking what is happening.  
More than half a tree is spread out in the soil under  
your feet. Penetrate quietly as the earthworm that blows no trumpet...  
Weave real connections, create real nodes, build real houses.  
Live a life you can endure: make love that is loving. Keep  
tangling and interweaving and taking more in, a thicket  
and bramble wilderness to the outside but to us interconnected  
with rabbit runs and burrows and lairs.  
Live as if you liked yourself, and it may happen: reach out,  
keep reaching out, keep bringing in. This is how we are  
going to live for a long time: not always, for every gardener  
knows that after the digging, after the planting, after the  
long season of tending and growth, the harvest comes.  
—Marge Piercy, from *The Seven Pentacles*

*Blessing over Challah*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,  
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

*Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha-olam ha-motzee lechem meen ha-aretz.*  
Blessed are You, Adonai, Source of all life. You bring forth bread from the earth.

*Closing song*

**Planting Song by Jeff Klepper**

There are plants and trees that give us nearly everything we need,  
But don't forget they started out as tiny little seeds.  
You can throw them in the air or you can plant them in the ground  
But some day those tiny seeds will grow and Trees will fill the land

**Chorus**

So take a little seed, plant it in the ground  
And those seeds will grow as the seasons flow  
With Branches in the ground

In the Torah it is written, when they saw the Promised Land  
They planted trees at ev'ry turn for this was God's command  
And today in modern Israel where they make the desert bloom  
In such a tiny country, for a tree there's always room, so...

**Chorus**

In the Talmud is a story written many years ago  
That every plant has a special seed to teach it how to grow  
So if you happen to be planting and someone comes along

Finish what you're doing and together sing this song.... **Chorus**

**TREE OF LIFE by Todd Herzog, 2007**

It was planted by my grandpa, In his wisdom and his forethought  
To provide shade and protection for our family,  
As he finished with his toil, He looked up at me from the soil  
And I never will forget the words he said to me

**If you hold on tight, To this tree of life  
You will live a life of justice and integrity  
If you learn to see, It will set you free  
And the more you give the more you will receive  
Just hold onto the tree, Etz Chayim Hi**

I was on a search for knowledge, As I headed off to college  
But my hopes of fame and fortune were my fantasy  
I got caught up in the current, Life was passing in a hurry  
And advice from long ago was just a memory

**If you hold on tight, To this tree of life  
You will live a life of justice and integrity  
If you learn to see, It will set you free  
And the more you give the more you will receive  
Just hold onto the tree, Etz Chayim Hi**

When the phone rang that day, There was a voice from far away  
It was a wake up call from home  
So I drove 500 miles, For a hug and one last smile  
And I cried as he let go

**If you hold on tight, To this tree of life  
You will live a life of justice and integrity  
If you learn to see, It will set you free  
And the more you give the more you will receive  
Just hold onto the tree, Etz Chayim Hi**

The years flow by like water, As I look upon my daughter  
I can see my grandpa's image looking back at me  
I can almost hear his laughter, Coming through from ever after  
As I teach her of her family's famous legacy

**If you hold on tight, To this tree of life  
You will live a life of justice and integrity  
If you learn to see, It will set you free  
And the more you give the more you will receive  
Just hold onto the tree, Etz Chayim Hi  
Just hold onto the tree, Etz Chayim Hi**

It's time for you and me, To hold onto the tree Etz Chayim Hi



Discussion questions: The Lorax on Tu BiSh'vat

- Why is this a great story for Tu BiSh'vat?
- In what ways did the land of the Lorax seem like someplace you'd like to live? What parts of your own environment would you be saddest to see go? How much is it a viable option to let these habitats die? Do increasing global population pressures narrow options?
- Why won't the Once-ler listen to the Lorax? The Lorax says to the Once-ler, "You are crazy with greed." Is this true for all opposed to environmental conservation? What are other motives?
- Why does the Lorax speak for the trees? Who must we speak up for – Jewish imperative? Have you spoken up for someone else? Has someone else ever spoken up for you?
- How does the Once-ler's Thneed business hurt the land of the Lorax? Is it only the trees that suffer: what happens to the Swomee-swans, the Brown Bar-ba-loots, and the Humming-fish?
- How is the Lorax like our prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah? Why don't we like to listen to them? The Lorax is a cautionary tale
- What do you think the boy hearing the story will do with the Truffula seed that the Once-ler tosses to him? What would you do if you were the boy?
- Do you think the Lorax and his friends will come back if new Truffula Trees grow? Where do you think they have been?
- How does the Once-ler feel about what his Thneed business did to the Lorax and friends?
- The Once-ler says, "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." What does the Once-ler mean? Can one person make a difference? How?