

Welcome to our Tu B'Shevat Seder

Tu B'Shevat, the "New Year for the Trees", happens every year on the Fifteenth of the Hebrew month of Shevat.

When Tu B'Shevat arrives in Israel, it signals the start of spring when nature is waking up from its winter nap.

During this seder, like at a Passover one, we will drink four cups of juice. For Tu B'Shevat each cup will be different. We'll start with a very light juice and each cup we drink will get darker, reflecting the cycles of nature. We will also eat nuts and fruits.

Environmental ideas are inherent in this day of celebrating nature. As we go through the seder, let each of us think of new ways we can care for our environment. It is not enough to merely talk about trees and thank God for them. We must actively work to protect trees and the ecosystems they root.

♪ SONG: HINEI MA TOV

הִנֵּה מָה טוֹב וְיָמָה נָעִים שָׁכַת אַחִים גַּמְיָחַד

Hinei ma tov uma na-im
Shevet achim gam yachad

Behold how good and pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together

READER:

TREES

Joyce Kilmer

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.

THE FIRST CUP – WINTER (White juice)

READER:

The first cup of juice is white, reminding us of winter. Snow is still on the ground, but Nature is waking up. Although many trees stand with their dark branches against the gray winter sky, spring isn't far away. We rejoice in the renewal of life, and thank God for the blessings of branch and bud.

LEADER:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגֶּפֶן:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Blessed are you, God, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

THE FIRST FRUIT – Fruits and Nuts with Shells (Almonds and Oranges)

READER:

The first type of fruit we eat in honor of Tu B'Shevat is hard on the outside and soft on the inside, such as almonds or oranges. The hard shell symbolizes the protection that the earth gives us and reminds us to nourish the strength and healing power of our own bodies.

READER:

We eat these fruits and nuts to remind us that appearance may be deceiving. Although seemingly inedible from the outside, each of these foods, when peeled or shelled, will transcend their outward appearance.

READER:

Judaism teaches us that people are so much more than they appear, and eating these fruits reminds us that despite our size, shape, or color, we all carry a divine spark within because each of us is created *B'tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God.

LEADER:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz.

Blessed are you, God, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

READER:

We're Out Of Paint, So.....
Adapted from Shel Silverstein's Falling Up

Let's paint a picture with our food.
For red we'll squeeze these cherries.
For purple let's splash grape juice on.
For blue we'll use blueberries.
We'll sign our names in applesauce
And title it "Our Luncheon,"
And hang it up for everyone
To stop and see and munch on.

READER:

Teach Your Children
Attributed to Chief Seattle

Teach your children
what we have taught our Children —
that the earth is our mother.
Whatever befalls the earth
befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.
If men spit upon the ground,
they spit upon themselves.

This we know:
The earth does not belong to us,
we belong to the earth.
This we know:
All things are connected
like the blood which unites one family.
All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth
befalls the sons and daughters of the earth.
We did not weave the web of life;
We are merely a strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web,
we do to ourselves.

THE SECOND CUP – SPRING (A drop of red juice poured into the white juice)

READER:

We drink the second cup of white juice with a touch of red for the warming of spring and the rising sap in the trees. The change of color from white to light pink symbolizes the gradual process of the rebirth of spring and the transition from one year to the next. Just as each new stream begins with a trickle, each flower with a single bud, we watch as our simple drops of red juice slowly transform the color of our glass.

LEADER:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגֶּפֶן:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Blessed are you, God, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

THE SECOND FRUIT - Fruit with Inedible Pits (Apricots and Dates)

READER:

The second type of fruit we eat contains inedible pits. Although these pits are often discarded, we must remember that they are the seeds, the means to rebirth. We eat these fruits to remind us that every flowering tree was once barren, every budding field once bare, and that the means to growth can sometimes come from the most overlooked of places.

READER:

We eat pitted fruits to remind us that all of God's creatures are valuable and significant and that before we discard anything or anyone, we should take the time to find that value, to explore the hidden spark within us all.

LEADER:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz.

Blessed are you, God, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

READER:

A Story about a Pretty Big Seed
By Le'ah Naor, from her book of stories for the holidays, Chag Li

One seed, pretty big, about like this, lay in the ground, he lay and lay and here's what he thought: I am terribly thirsty. If only I had a drop of water! I want water. A drop of water.
Water water water!!!

Suddenly the seed was touched by a small cool and transparent drop with the fragrance of first rain. The seed drank and drank and drank the whole drop until the last drop, and swelled and swelled more and more until he became a very big seed. The big seed lay in the ground and thought:

I wonder what kind of seed I am and what can come out of me. Perhaps I am a seed of a thorn or a thistle or perhaps I am a seed of elephant grass. Ooh, how scary that is. I wish I were a seed of chocolate. But what does a seed of chocolate look like exactly? Oy, I am being torn!

The seed stopped thinking. He did not have time. He was very busy, from within him came roots and leaves, and more roots and leaves, the kind he had never seen before, and more and more. He never imagined that all these beautiful and giant things were folded within him, when he was still a seed.

A few years later he was the tallest of all the trees in the neighborhood.

One time a small boy climbed him, picked from him a date, brown and sweet, ate the date and threw the pit to the ground.

A wind came, brought dust and sand and covered the pit. The pit lay in the ground many days, he lay and lay and here's what he thought: I am terribly thirsty. If only I had a drop of water! I want water. A drop of water. Water water water!!!

Suddenly the pit was touched by a small cool and transparent drop with the fragrance of first rain.

READER:

Olives have always had great importance for the land of Israel. There are some olive trees in Israel which are 1000 years old and still producing fruit. The roots of the olive tree go down deep into the soil, holding it down and preventing erosion. It is very hard to destroy an olive tree. If you cut off the branches and leave just the stump, it will send forth new saplings and grow again.

Adapted from the Jewish Women's Resource Center

READER:

The date dates back a long time in Jewish tradition. The date palm appears in the story of Deborah the prophetess, Deborah used to sit under the Palm of Deborah, in the hill country, and the Israelites would come to her to hear her decisions. (Judges 4:5)

THE THIRD CUP – SUMMER (Pour half the red juice into the white juice)

READER:

The change of color from light pink to dark pink symbolizes the warmth and ripening of summer. Although the trees are full and green and the flowers have blossomed, their growth is not complete. So much more will be created; so much more will come to be.

LEADER:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Blessed are you, God, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

THE THIRD FRUIT – Completely Edible (Grapes and Blueberries)

READER: We eat these fruits to remind us of the wholeness of the world. As we eat, we reflect that although our lives may feel rushed, we must pause to look at the wholeness of God's creations and learn to love and appreciate them.

READER: We take time to look at the wholeness of our own creations, to examine our relationship with the world, making the necessary changes so that we can call our actions good. Do we recycle? Do we conserve energy? Are we conscious of where our food comes from? What kind of cars do we drive?

LEADER:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-eitz.

Blessed are you, God, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

♪ SONG: THE GARDEN SONG

Inch by inch, row by row,
Gonna make this garden grow,
All it takes is a rake and a hoe,
And a piece of fertile ground.

Inch by inch, row by row,
Someone bless these seeds I sow,
Someone warm them from below
'Til the rain comes tumblin' down.

Pullin' weeds and pickin' stones,
We are made of dreams and bones
Feel the need to grow my own
'Cause the time is close at hand.
Grain for grain, sun and rain,
Find my way in nature's chain,
Tune my body and my brain
To the music from the land.

Plant your rows straight and long,
Temper them with prayer and song,
Mother Earth will make you strong
If you give her love and care.

Old crow watching hungrily,
From his perch in yonder tree,
In my garden I'm as free
As that feathered thief up there.

THE FOURTH CUP - FALL (Red juice)

READER:

Our fourth cup of juice is dark red, symbolizing the deep colors of fall. The world glows in orange and red. The fruits ripening on the trees remind us of the need to harvest and save for the coming winter.

LEADER:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Blessed are you, God, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

READER:

The Talmud teaches us that "the apple tree has the fragrance of the Garden of Eden and the fragrance of the Garden of Eden has that of a field of apples." Each day we must pause from our lives to notice the small wonders of earth, the smell of dew, the color of the changing leaves, the sounds of birds migrating south for winter. Only then can we experience that which lays hidden in the crevices of our world.

LEADER:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
בוֹרֵא מִיְי בְּשָׂמִים.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei minei v'samim.

Blessed are you, God, Source of all life, Creator of different types of spices.

[Enjoy the sweet fragrance of cinnamon]

READER:

All Foods That Grow

We thank You, Dear God
For all foods that grow
In colors so bright
Just like a Rainbow.

For cherries so red,
For plums ripe and blue
For all your good foods,
Dear God, we thank you

READER:

We pray that this celebration of Tu B'Shevat will inspire us with a deeper sensitivity to the natural gifts you have given us to tend. We have an obligation to care for the earth, to utilize it while at the same time preserving it for future generations.

READER:

May the New Year be a year of growth, may it be a year of renewal, and may all our eyes be opened to the wonders of creation. May we come to appreciate everything that is around us and may we learn to build a brighter and better future for our children.

RABBI'S COMMENTS

♪ **SONG: THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND** by Woody Guthrie

Chorus

This land is your land, this land is my land.
From California, to the New York Island.
From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream water.
This land was made for you and me.

As I was walkin', that ribbon of highway,
I saw above me, that endless skyway.
I saw below me, that golden valley.
This land was made for you and me.

Chorus

The sun came shining, and I was strolling
And the wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling
As the fog was lifting, a voice was chanting
This land was made for you and me.

Chorus

LEADER:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, hamotzi lechem min ha-aretz.

Blessed are you, God, Source of all life, who brings forth bread from the earth.

Enjoy your dinner!