

THE FRUITS OF OUR WORLD

A Tu BiShvat Seder

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Ah-va-deem ha-uee-noo... We were slaves in the Land of Egypt, and God, the Creator of all living things, brought us forth as free people unto our own Land.

As free people we settled our land and planted. The earth brought forth fruit, vegetables, trees and grasses. And the animals, too, flourished. Thus we and the earth prospered.

So it is for us to remember our freedom and our responsibility to plant and protect the land and all that lives on it so that we and the earth continue to prosper.

Let us begin.

We bless the first cup of wine, white, symbolizing the Winter season. We remember that nature has been asleep, awaiting warmer weather and the annual cycle of rebirth of growing things.

Barukh atah Adonai Elohaynu melekh ha'olam boray pri hagafen.

We praise You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

We also say a special prayer on the occasion:

Barukh atah Adonai Elohaynu melekh ha'olam, shehehe'yanu vekiyemanu vehigiyanu lazman hazeh. We praise You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has kept us in life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this time.

We now wash our hands.

The Creator has made many different types of fruit and vegetables. We now take a piece of parsley and dip it in into salt water to commemorate the years we were not free to take the responsibility of caring for our world.

BREAK BREAD

This is the bread from our earth that God the Creator raises from the Earth. All who are hungry—let them come and eat. All who are needy—let them come and celebrate this festival with us. Now we are here in a world that needs us to help the Lord God of all repair the world; next year may we be here in a world that has begun to heal. Now we are slaves to our old ways; next year may we be free.

Barukh atah Adonai Elohaynu melekh ha'olam, hamatz lahmin ha-retz.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS

Why is this night different from all other nights:

On all other nights we eat meat and vegetables, bread and fruit;
Why on this night do we eat especially fruit?

On all other nights we eat fruits of the tree and fruits of the earth;
Why on this night do we eat especially fruits of the tree?

On all other nights we only eat once;
Why on this night do we eat many times?

On all other nights we eat out of joy or out of hunger;
Why on this night do we eat with intention?¹

We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt and the Eternal our God brought us out of there to freedom. As free people we settled our land and planted. The earth brought forth fruit, vegetables, trees and grasses. And the animals, too, flourished. Thus we and the earth prospered. So it is for us to remember our freedom and our responsibility to plant and protect the land and all that lives on it so that we and the earth may continue to prosper.

Blessed is God, Who gave the Torah to His people Israel. Blessed is God the Creator. The Torah speaks about four children: one who is wise and one who is contrary; one who is simple and one who does not even know how to ask a question.

The wise child asks: "What is the meaning of life on earth which the Eternal our God has given us? You will explain to the child:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the first man and woman,
He led them around the Garden of Eden, took them before all the trees, and said:
"Look at My works!
See how beautiful and how excellent My works are!
For your sake I created them all.
Do not corrupt or desolate My world.
For if you corrupt or desolate it,
there will be no one else to repair it after you." (Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:28)²

The contrary child asks "What is the meaning of this tale to you?" Saying "you" this child wrongly excludes himself from the group, and he denies a basic principle. We are commanded to remember our dependence on nature and our obligations as Jews and as human beings to our world and to nature, and to alert us to the consequences of failing to fulfill those obligations:

If you will earnestly heed the mitzvot that I give you this day, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, then I will favor your land with rain at the proper season—rain in autumn and rain in spring—and you will have an ample harvest of grain and wine and oil. I will assure abundance in the fields for your cattle. You will eat to contentment. Take care lest you be tempted to forsake God and turn to false gods in worship. For then the wrath of the Lord will be directed against you. He will close the heavens and hold back the rain; the earth will not yield its produce. You will soon disappear from the good land which the Lord is giving you. (D'varim 11:13-17)

The simple child asks: "What is this since it does not concern me?" To him you shall say:

Two men were on the water in a rowboat. Suddenly, one of them started to saw under his feet. He maintained that it was his right to do whatever he wished with the place which belonged to him. The other answered him that they were in the rowboat together—the hole that he was making would sink both of them. We have a responsibility to life, to defend it everywhere, not only against our own sins, but also against those of others. We are now all passengers together in this same fragile and glorious world. We must safeguard our rowboat and row together. (Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, from THE JEWISH DECLARATION, Assisi Meeting of Religion and Environment, 1986)³

As for the child who does not even know how to ask a question, you must begin as it is written: "You shall tell your child on that day: This is done because of that which the Eternal did for me when he created the world."

And it is also written: When God created the world, He made everything a little bit incomplete. Instead of making bread grow out of the earth, He made wheat grow so that people might bake it into bread. Instead of making the earth of bricks, He made it of clay so that man might bake the clay into bricks. Why? So that people could become His partner in the task of completing the work of creation and

sustaining our earth. (Midrash)⁴

It is for this ignorant child that we explain about our duty to sustain the Earth.

Blessed be God, Who created the world and commanded His people to protect His Creation.

But many do not remember God's fine work nor heed His command. So there arose plagues of mankind's own creation—Ten Plagues of Our World: (spill a drop of wine for each of the ten plagues)

1. ACID RAIN
2. DESTRUCTION OF THE RAIN FOREST
3. POLLUTION OF OCEANS, LAKES, AND RIVERS
4. POLLUTION OF THE AIR
5. CREATING GARBAGE LANDFILLS
6. DESTRUCTION OF THE OZONE
7. EXTINCTION OF SPECIES
8. OVER-CONSUMPTION OF ENERGY
9. OVER POPULATION
10. APATHY TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE PLANET

We know that we created these plagues but that we can reverse them, too. These are the solutions to the Plagues:

1. CONSERVING ENERGY
2. CAR POOLING AND COMBINING TRIPS
3. PLANTING TREES AND PLANTS
4. AVOIDING AEROSOLS AND FLUOROCARBONS
5. RECYCLING
6. REUSING
7. USING RECYCLED PRODUCTS
8. SUPPORTING PRESERVATION OF ENDANGERED SPECIES
9. SUPPORTING FAMILY PLANNING
10. ENCOURAGING ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY BY INDUSTRY, GOVERNMENT, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS, AND INDIVIDUALS

How thankful must we be to God, the All-Present, for all the good He did for us.

(We recite DAYENU)

If God had only created the oceans
and had not made the vegetation to grow....Dayenu.

If God had only created the seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind
and had not made animals of every kind....Dayenu.

If God had only created the fish that swim in the water, the birds that fly above, and creatures of all
kinds that creep and graze and inhabit the earth,
and had not made man and woman....Dayenu.

If God had only created man and woman in his image
and had not made them a little lower than the angels....Dayenu.

If God only created man and woman a little lower than the angels
and had not given them dominion over the plants and the animals....Dayenu.

If God had only created man and woman's power over all the things on the earth
and had not given man and woman the power to conserve and preserve....Dayenu.

If God had only created man and woman's power to conserve and preserve and had not told them to sustain the earth....Dayenu.

Let us now wash our hands and say:

Blessed art You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who made us holy with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands.

Before eating the first fruit of the seder, we say the following:

We praise You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

We now eat some fruit in the first type of fruit we eat in honor of Tu BiShvat, fruit which can be eaten in its entirety, such as raisins, grapes, or figs. Oranges and tangerines are also included in this category.⁵

We now drink the second cup of wine—white mixed with a bit of red. It symbolizes Spring and the reawakening of the earth. The berakhah is recited:⁶

Barukh atah Adonai Elohaynu melekh ha'olam boray pri hagafen.

We praise You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

We now eat a second kind of fruit—fruit with an inner pit which cannot be eaten. Today we take a date.⁷

We praise You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

When the Bible spoke of a "land flowing with milk and honey," it referred to the honey from the date palm, tamar. The tamar is one of the trees which abounds with blessing, for every part of it can be used: its fruit is 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. For this reason, the rabbis compared the people of Israel to this tree which contains no excess. So today as we try to reuse, recycle, and renew let us remember the date-palm.⁸

Rabbi Dov Ber the Maggid from Mezaritch used to say: "There are two types of righteous people. There are the righteous who mingle with the masses and teach them and bring them closer to the Law and the commandments, and there are the righteous who shut themselves up within their own narrow space and concentrate on the law and service to the Lord. The former are like the date-palm, bearing fruit and life-giving sustenance to the land and its inhabitants. The latter are like the cedar, lofty and exalted, but barren of fruit."⁹

It is written that "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: He shall grow like a cedar of Lebanon (Psalm 92:13)." In our Shabbat service we sing these words. (sing Tzadik Katamar)

Carob [bokser] is also in this category of fruit.¹⁰

R. Johanan told this legend (Taanit 23a):

Many years ago, in Israel, there lived a righteous man named Honi. One day, he saw an old man planting a carob tree with his grandchild. Honi looked at the two of them and asked the old man: "Do you think you will still be alive to eat from the fruit of this tree since it takes 70 years for it to bear fruit?" The man replied: "My grandparents planted a tree for me and now I am planting one for my grandchildren." Tired from the heat of the day, Honi went to a spot in the shade in the shade for a short nap. But the short nap became a sleep of many years and, when he awakened, Honi did not realize that he was much, much older. Honi returned to the spot where he had seen the grandfather and grandchild together, planting the carob tree. He was surprised to see a gull-grown tree and an elderly woman giving its fruit to a different child, the great-grandchild of the man who had first planted

the tree. Honi then realized what had happened to him and understood the lesson he had learned. One must plant not only for oneself, but for future generations as well.¹¹

The third cup of wine is darker and richer in color, red with some white, symboling the arrival of Spring. Let us say the berakhah together and drink:¹²

Barukh atah Adonai Elohaynu melekh ha'olam boray pri hagafen.

We praise You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

We now eat a third type of fruit we eat is one that has a shell or hard outer skin which cannot be eaten. We take a few almonds or walnuts and say:¹³

We praise You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

One of the first trees to awaken after its Winter rest is the almond tree, the shkediah. Its white blossoms, at times tinged with pink, appear almost overnight in Israel, covering the hills and valleys with spots of bright color. It blooms just around the time of Tu BiShvat and is the symbol of the holiday. song: Hashkediah Porahat.¹⁴

With the arrival of Spring, plants and flowers blossom as do feelings of love. There is the promise of richness and abundance as the snow melts and the first delicate buds appear. Some beautiful verses that express the close relationship which people can have, and our relationship with the earth are found in Shir HaShirim, the song of Songs. ¹⁵(Dodi Li)

We are ready to drink the fourth cup, completely red, the darkest and richest of all. The ground has nourished the seeds and the crops are in full growth. The fields will yield their crops and the trees their harvest of fruit. Life-sustaining food will be provided for all living things. Let us say the berakhah together and drink the fourth cup of wine.¹⁶

Barukh atah Adonai Elohaynu melekh ha'olam boray pri hagafen.

We praise You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Fruits of the fourth type, those with an inner pit and inedible outer skin, include mangos, avocados and papayas. We take a piece of this type of fruit and say the berakhah together before eating:¹⁷

We praise You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

Rachel, the author of the poem Artzi (My Land) was an early pioneer who came to Israel from Russia. She was a member of Kibbutz Kinneret and her poems reflect her love of the land and of nature.¹⁸

Land of mine,
I have never sung to you
nor glorified your name
with heroic deeds or the spoils of battle.

All I have done is plant a tree
on the silent shores of the Jordan.
and my feet have trodden a path
across the fields.¹⁹

(song Eretz Zavav Halav U'Dvash)

We now fill this cup for Elijah the Prophet. May all of our brothers and sisters around the world who want for food and drink quickly receive these blessings of life.

May it be your will, O our God and God of our ancestors, that through our drinking of the wine and our eating of the fruits which we have blessed, the trees of Israel and of all the world renew themselves

by blossoming and growing. May the trees add to the beauty and the blessing of the world.²⁰

We now plant these parsley seeds²¹ to give thanks to God—Borei Haetz uvoreit p'ri haetz—the Creator of the trees, the creator of the fruit of the tree, and the creator of all²²

[May be done while planting or after]

Dear God—You who created day and night, the sun and the stars, the earth and the sea, the trees and all vegetation, the birds, the fish and all living creatures, and finally man and women—we pray that You give us the strength and the wisdom to care for all of Your creations. May we be capable of accepting the responsibility to see our world right. For our sake, and for the sake of our children, may we be able to save our earth, so that we, and they, may enjoy Your creation, as did the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden, for eternity.²³

We pray that this seder celebration of Tu BiShvat inspires in us a deeper sensitivity to nature's gifts and to our responsibility to protect them. May the day soon come when we can plant a tree ourselves in Israel in fulfillment of the commandments.²⁴

L'shana haba'ah Birushalayim
Next year in Jerusalem!

“PLANT AN IDEA—GROW A TRADITION” CENTERPIECES FOR TU BISHVAT

Materials: smallest clay pots or small paper cups
 large pot or bag of soil
 watering can
 spoons
 envelope of parsley seeds

Methods:

Put large pot or bag of soil in center of table. Arrange small pots around the bag providing one pot per person. Put seed envelope on top of soil. Arrange spoons around pots. Have each person fill small pot halfway with soil, using a spoon. Open seed envelope and put several seeds in soil, following package directions. Sprinkle with water after planting.

Each person will take home a pot to be placed on a sunny windowsill. Water regularly at home. This Tu BiShvat planting should yield fresh parsley for the Pesah Seder table.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Tzafon Region USY Tu BiShvat Seder, p. 4.

² Women's League, Environmental Sabbath, p. 11, and Likrat Shabbat, p. 95.

³ Women's League, Environmental Sabbath, p. 10.

⁴ Rabbi Jonathan D. Levine, Likrat Shabbat, p. 127.

⁵ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 3.

⁶ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 4.

⁷ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 4.

⁸ Tzafon Region USY Tu BiShvat Seder, p. 7.

⁹ Tu Bishvat: Background Materials and Program Activities compiled by Yekutiel Shur, Trees and Legends, p. 2.

¹⁰ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 4.

¹¹ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 4.

¹² Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 5.

¹³ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 5.

¹⁴ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 5.

¹⁵ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 6.

¹⁶ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 6.

¹⁷ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 7.

¹⁸ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 7.

¹⁹ Women's League Tu BiShevat Seder, p. 7.

²⁰ Tzafon Region USY Tu BiShvat Seder, p. 15.

²¹ For directions, see enclosed copy of Women's League VT Directive #304 Fall, 1986.

²² Tzafon Region USY Tu BiShvat Seder, p. 15.

²³ Jessica Gribetz, Women's League Environmental Sabbath, p. 2.

²⁴ Tzafon Region USY Tu BiShvat Seder, p. 15.

SOURCES

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