

## Give Tzedakah

*"When a person is privileged to eat in the presence of God, he must show his appreciation by giving to the poor and feeding them, just as God in His bounty feeds him."*

*(Zohar: Parshat Trumah)*

Judaism speaks of tzedakah (tze-da-kah), not charity. What's the difference? Charity implies voluntary behavior; charity asks you to give from your heart. Tzedakah is an obligation, a responsibility, to help others and your community. In the Torah, we are commanded to care for the poor in our midst.

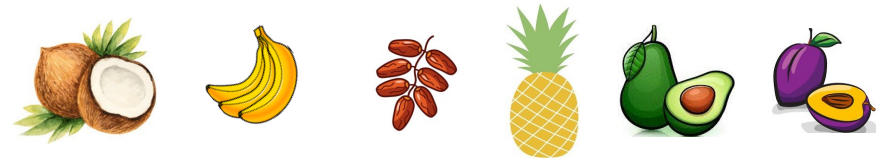
*"If your brother becomes impoverished and his means falter in your proximity, you shall strengthen him - proselyte or resident - so that he can live with you."*

*Leviticus 25:35*

Giving tzedakah is one of the behaviors that make us holy, that brings us closer to being in the image of God.

*"You shall be holy, for holy I am, Hashem, your God . . . When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not complete your reaping to the corner of your field, and the gleanings of your harvest you shall not take . . . the fallen fruit of your vineyard you shall not gather; for the poor and the proselyte shall you leave them - I am Hashem, your God." Leviticus 19:2:10*

Tu B'shvat marks a new period for taking tithes, a portion of which is given to the poor. So it is appropriate, to remember the origin of the holiday and incorporate an element of tzedakah into your celebration of the holiday. Select an appropriate organization for your donation — a local food bank is a nice choice or you can send it to an organization that feeds the hungry in Israel or elsewhere in the world.



## Seder for Tu b'Shvat

*God said, Let the earth sprout vegetation: herbage yielding seed, fruit trees yielding fruit each after its kind, containing its own seed on the earth. And it was so. And the earth brought forth vegetation: herbage yielding seed after its kind, and trees yielding fruit, each containing its seed after its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

*Genesis 1:11-12*



## *Tu b'Shvat Seder* *Suggested Menu—includes*

*5 of each type of fruit / nut  
& the Biblical Seven Species*

*Wheat · Barley · Grapes · Figs  
Pomegranates · Olives · Dates*

### *Olam Ha-Assiyah—World Of Action*

Ruth's Mix Tu b'Shvat Style (nuts + carob + coconut)  
Smoothie (banana + pineapple + coconut)  
Orange slices

### *Olam Ha'etzirah—World of Formation*

Mixed Israeli Olives  
Dried Fruit Stuffed w/ cheese

### *Olam Hab'riyah—World Of Creation*

Cherry Tomatoes + Fresh Mozz + Basil Pesto  
Mixed Berries + Grapes

### *Olam Ha'atzilut—World Of Emanation*

Mini Avocado Toast w/ Pomegranate  
Green Salad w/ Green Goddess  
Vegetarian Wellington or Mushroom Walnut Loaf  
Macaroni & Cheese or Mashed Potatoes  
KoÇo Wheat (Noah's Pudding)

*Higher than the firmament,  
God created the stars  
That give light to the world.  
Higher than the stars,  
God created the trees.  
For these give fruit  
While the stars do not give fruit.*

*Avot DeRabbi Nathan*

Every part of the vegetable world is singing a song  
And bringing forth a secret of the Divine mystery of the Creation

*Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook*



#### **Plant Parsley Seeds**

As we conclude our Tu B'Shvat seder, we borrow a new tradition that seems to have come from Jewish nursery schools all over the country. We've just spent time symbolically moving through the seasons of the year. As a concrete symbol of the imminent move from winter to spring and our anticipation of the upcoming Passover holiday, we plant parsley seeds. If we tend them carefully and God provides sunlight, they will sprout and grow to provide parsley for our Passover seder.



#### **Blessing for Planting the Parsley**

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, shelo chisar ba'olamo davar, u'vara vo b'riot tovot v'ilanot tovim l'hanot bahem b'nai adam.

Blessed are you, Lord our God Ruler of the Universe, who created beautiful creatures and trees in the world so that people may delight in them.

## Conclusion of the Seder

May it be Your will, O God of our ancestors, 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.



### Concluding Prayers

*Master of the Universe*

*Grant me the ability to be alone.*

*May it be my custom to go outdoors each day*

*Among the trees and grass, among all growing things.*

*And there may I enter into prayer*

*To talk with the One I belong to.*

*Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav*

It is forbidden to live in a town which has no garden or greenery.

*Kiddushin 4:12*

## Why Do We Celebrate Now?

The rainy season is ending in Israel. Almond trees begin to blossom around the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shvat. Ancient Jewish farmers used this date to designate the beginning of the new crop year for tax purposes.

After the Second Temple was destroyed and Jews were exiled from the Land, Tu B'Shvat took on special meaning as an expression of our connection to the Land and our longing to return. But it was the Kabbalists living in northern Israel centuries later who established Tu B'Shvat as the holiday we know today. They expanded their understanding of the day, not just as a celebration of the renewal of agricultural life, but as a time to rejoice in all of God's creation.

It was these spiritual men who created the first Tu B'Shvat Seder, modeled after the Passover Seder. In the nearly 1,500 years since, the Tu B'Shvat Seder has evolved into an expression of our joy over nature, our strong ties to the Land of Israel, and our commitment to protecting the environment.



## What does Tu b'Shvat Mean?

Tu B'Shvat literally means the fifteenth of Shvat.

Taken from the Hebrew letters representing 15 (tet=9 and vov=6), which when put together are pronounced **tu** (too). It became known as **Rosh Hashana La Ilanot** - New Year of the Trees (roshe ha-sha-na la ee-la-note).

## Structure of the Seder

The Tu B'Shvat seder, like the Passover seder, follows a specific order. It is divided into four parts, representing the four worlds of the Kabbalists. As in the Pesach seder, we drink four cups of wine, each cup here changing color to correspond to the changing seasons. We eat fifteen types of fruits and nuts in three groups, representing special significance for the first three of the four worlds. According to Kabbalah, the four worlds are:

- **Assiyah** (ah-see-yah) - Action
- **Y'tzirah** (ye-tzee-rah) - Formation
- **B'riah** (be-ree-ah) - Creation
- **Atzilut** (ah-tzee-loot) - Emanation



## Four Questions

Following the tradition of the Passover Seder, we begin with Four Questions.

1. On Rosh Hashana (the Jewish New Year), we focus on ourselves and our relationships with others and with God. Why, on this New Year, do we focus on trees and nature?
2. On all other days, we eat any type of fruit. Why, on this day, do we eat specific fruits?
3. On other days, we take trees and nature for granted. Why, on this day, do we think about conservation?
4. In many parts of the world, it is cold and snowy. Why, on this day, do we speak of planting?

The seder will help us answer these questions.

*In 1965, Eli was arrested and executed in Damascus as a spy. Two years later during the Six Day War, when Israeli forces took the Golan Heights, they were able to spot the Syrian outposts easily. They looked for the eucalyptus trees on the otherwise barren hills.*

### A Teaching

*Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai taught: If you should be standing with a sapling in your hand when the Messiah arrives, first finish planting the tree, then go and greet the Messiah.*

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.

### Drink the Fourth Glass of Wine — deep red wine

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are you, Lord our God Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.



## *The Fourth World: Olam Ha'atzilut The World Of Emanation*

**Atzilut (ah-tzee-loot)**, the fourth world, is the world of Emanation — Sending Forth. 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.

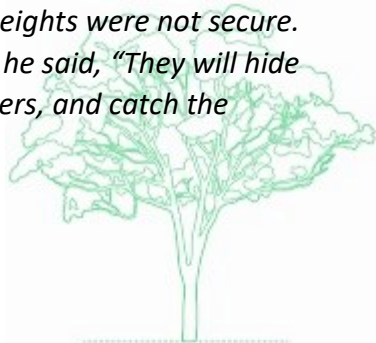
The pure red wine represents the full bloom of nature before the cold winter. As nature expends its last bit of energy, a full cycle is completed.

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. Deep within another hardness was found, protected by the softness which surrounded it. Finally, 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, and wisdom with our hearts, not our senses. Our hearts are full and we praise the Source which renews all creation.

### **A Story**

*Eli Cohen was an Israeli secret agent who worked in Syria, where he earned a position of trust among the Syrian officials. One day, he suggested to the Syrian army officers that their outposts on the Golan Heights were not secure. "Why not plant eucalyptus trees," he said, "They will hide your positions, shade the hot soldiers, and catch the breezes." The Syrians agreed.*



## *The First World: Olam Ha-Assiyah The World Of Action*

**Assiyah (ah-see-yah)** is the world of action. It is the physical world represented by earth and the season of Winter.

White wine symbolizes the sleep that descends on nature in winter. The earth is barren and snow-covered. We blanket ourselves in layers of clothing, insulating ourselves from the cold just like the snow-covered earth is insulated. Hard-skinned fruit



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 everyday world of work, social media, information overload, and personal stress our spirituality requires protection too. We must work to protect it from indifference, from being forgotten, and from unkind influences.

We crack the shells of the nuts and release the Divine sparks for **Tikkun Olam** (tee-koon o-lahm), Healing of the World. We crack our own shells to release ourselves from our preoccupations and open ourselves to experience the Divine sparks within us.

### **Walnuts**

Rabbi Tarfon likened the people of Israel to a pile of walnuts. If one walnut is removed, each and every walnut in the pile will be shaken. When a single Jew is shaken, every other Jew is shaken and affected.

*Avot D'Rabbi Natan*

### **Pomegranates - Rimonim**

The Rabbis say, "These are the children who are busy studying Torah; they sit in rows like pomegranate seeds."

So the gleaming red pomegranate seeds remind us that we, too, must be attentive to study Torah.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria, a Talmudic sage of the 1st century CE, said: “Anytime our wisdom exceeds our good deeds, to what are we likened? - to a tree whose branches are numerous but whose roots are few; then the wind comes and uproots it and turns it upside down.... But when our good deeds exceed our wisdom, to what are we likened? - to a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are numerous; even if all the winds of the world were to come and blow against it, they could not budge it from its place.....”



### Environmental Conduct In the World of Assiyah - Action

“When you besiege a city many days to bring it into your power by making war against it to seize it, do not destroy its trees by swinging an axe against them, for from them you will eat, and you shall not cut it down; is the tree of the field a man that it should enter the siege before you?”  
 (Deuteronomy 20:19)

This prohibition serves as the foundation for an important principle of Jewish law: **b'al tashchit** (be-ahl tash-cheet) - the needless destruction of anything is wrong. The principle of b'al tashchit has been adopted passionately by the Jewish environmental movement.

“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

### Fig - T'einah (te-ee-nah)

The fig is mentioned in the Bible sixteen times together with the vine as the most important fruit of the Land of Israel.

The rabbis asked, “Why were the words of Torah compared to the fig tree?” They answered, “Since all the figs do not ripen at the same time, the more one searches the tree, the more figs one finds in it.” So it is with the words of the Torah — the more we study them, the more delightful morsels we find.

### Fruit of B'riyah — Soft-Skinned Fruits Without a Pit

These fruits are entirely edible. We eat the whole thing — skin, flesh and seeds.



As we eat the fruit of B'riyah, may our thoughts and actions be integrated. May we create harmony in our lives and in the world.

As we drink the third cup of wine, red with a dash of white, may we cherish the warmth of the summer and the abundance of our harvesting.

### Drink the Third Glass of Wine — red wine with a dash of white

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.  
 Blessed are you, Lord our God Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

### Eat Five Soft-Skinned Fruits Without Pits

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri ha'etz.  
 Blessed are you, Lord our God Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

## Another Story

*Many years ago in Israel, there lived a righteous man whose name was Honi. One day, Honi 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. Now I am planting for my grandchildren."*

*Weary from the heat of the day, Honi retired to a shady spot for a nap. But the short nap became a sleep of 70 years, and when he awoke, he did not know that his hair had turned as white as snow. He was surprised to see a full grown carob tree and an elderly man picking its fruit. "Are you the man who planted the tree?" Honi asked.*

*"No," The old man replied. "My grandfather planted it for me."*



## Gratitude

The Shehechyanu prayer expresses general gratitude. We customarily say it when we experience something for the first time, such as the eating a seasonal fruit for the first time or celebrating our first Shabbat in a new home. Many people say the prayer at significant milestones, both large and small, wearing a new article of clothing or visiting a new place. We say it now, for our first glass of wine and our first fruits.

**Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, shehechyanu, v'kiyemanu, v'higianu laz'man hazeh.**

Blessed are you, Lord our God Ruler of the Universe, who kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this time.

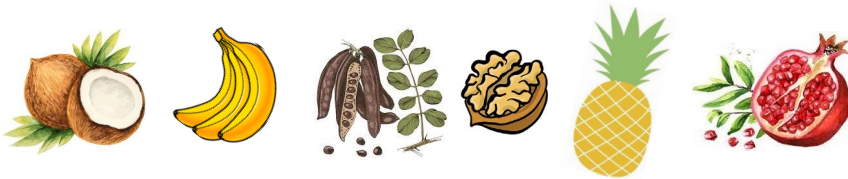


As we eat the fruit of Assiyah, may we be blessed with the courage to reveal ourselves, to be vulnerable, to grow, to repair, and to help heal.

As we drink this white wine, may we feel the sleep of the winter as it refuels our body and soul.

### Fruits of Assiyah: Hard-Shelled Fruits

We crack the outer shell and eat only the insides.



### Drink Glass of White Wine

**Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.**

Blessed are you, Lord our God Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

### Eat Hard-Shelled Fruits

**Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri ha'etz.**

Blessed are you, Lord our God Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.



As human beings, struggling to survive in a hostile world, we can develop hard shells to protect our inner core, like the fruit of the first world. Although we survive as individuals within our shells, we remain partly hidden and cut off from each other.

Touching one another takes the patient effort of separating the protective layer from the inner core while keeping the core intact.

We can also be more like the fruit of the second world, available up to a point, but withholding our innermost part, perhaps needing a secret toughness to keep from collapsing under the pressure. But in our most precious relationships, we are most like fruit that are soft throughout and can be eaten whole — available to each other in every aspect and facet of our personalities and strong in a way which does not cut any part of us off from ourselves or from each other.

### A Story



*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. 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)*



## *The Third World: Olam Hab'riyah The World Of Creation*

In the first telling of Creation, God commands humanity,  
“ . . . fill the earth and master it.” (Genesis 1:28)

The account also emphasizes that the created world and everything that fills it - the land and the seas, the trees and grass, the heavenly bodies, fish and birds, creeping things and land animals - are good. God blesses the birds and the fish to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:22). Humanity is given a unique role, yet we are also part of the entire world, all of which God said was “good.”

*“And Hashem God formed a human of dust from the ground, and God blew into their nostrils the soul of life; and human became a living being. . . Hashem God took the human and placed them in the Garden of Eden, to work it and to guard it.”*  
(Genesis 2:7,2:15)

We are instructed to cultivate for our human needs, in a manner that does not deplete and degrade Creation, but rather allows all life to flourish.



**B'riyah (b-ree-ah)**, the third world, is the world of Creation. This is the world of thoughts represented by air and the season of Summer. In the world of B'riyah, we drink red wine with a dash of white. The land grows warmer and the colors of the fruits deepen as they ripen. The darker wine reminds us that we, too, become warmer and more open.

## *The Second World: Olam Ha'yetzirah The World of Formation*

**Yetzirah** (ye-tzee-rah) is the world of Formation — the world in which we transform 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.

Yetzirah is the emotional world represented by Spring. In this world, we drink white wine with a splash of red; we eat fruits with soft outsides and hard inner cores.

We eat both the skin and soft flesh of these fruits. The hard pit, while inedible, is the source of life for a new tree.

White wine with a splash of red symbolizes the gradual deepening of color which parallels the reawakening of colors in nature as they begin to come 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. No longer wearing heavy layers, we expose our soft bodies to the sun. We eat fruit containing pits, which remind us 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.

### **Date - Tamar (tah-mar)**

The date palm abounds in blessing, for every part of it can be used. Its dates are for eating, its branches are for blessing on Sukkot, its fronds are for thatching, its fibers are for ropes, its webbing for sieves, its thick trunks for building.

The date reminds us of the commandment - b'al Tashchit - do not waste.

The date fruit is also cause for joy. When Moses heard that the spies had returned from scouting the land of Israel, they were requested to give their report. They said, "We came to the land to which you sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey." This was not an exaggeration for honey flowed from the date palm trees under which the goats grazed, out of whose udders poured milk, so that both milk and honey moistened the ground.

#### **A Story**

*Dates are nourishing and easy to dry and store. They provide food for journeys in the desert. It is probably because of this that Avshalom Feinberg had some dates in his pocket when he disappeared on his way to Egypt in 1917. Feinberg, a spy for a group that opposed Turkish rule over Palestine, was on an important mission. It was assumed that he was captured and killed.*

*After the Israelis regained control of Gaza in 1967, an old Arab led some soldiers to Feinberg's grave. There stood a beautiful, tall date palm. Perhaps it sprouted from the dates in his pocket.*



### **Olives - Zeitim (zay-teem)**

The olive tree is a sign of hope that, despite the enormity of destruction, life can be restored. When the great flood began to subside, Noah sent out a dove. "The dove came back to him toward evening—and behold! An olive leaf it had plucked with its bill!" (Genesis 8:11)

### **Forming Environmental Ethics**

In the World of Formation, we wonder what difference can we, as individuals, 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.

Plant a tree, plan your garden, make sure to recycle everything you can and make an effort not to be wasteful.

As we eat the fruit of Yetzirah, may our hearts be open to our feelings and needs and those of others.

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

#### **Drink the Second Glass of Wine — white with a dash of red**

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessed are you, Lord our God Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

#### **Eat Five Soft-Skinned Fruits**

Baruch atah adonai, eloheinu melech ha'olam, borei p'ri ha'etz.

Blessed are you, Lord our God Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.