

THE TU B'SHEVAT SEDER

IMAGINE Imagine the great mystics of Tsfat walking through the surrounding forests in the breathtaking landscape of the Galilean mountains, breathing in the air, taking in the wonders of nature, and glimpsing the hidden messages within. Their lofty spiritual attainments allow them to hear the gentle whispering of deep secrets in the winding old city alley ways.



They understood that this certain winter day, which until now had held practical significance, was actually pulsating with powerful spiritual potential for personal growth and connection.

And the Tu B'Shevav seder was born two thousand years ago, the Rabbis of the Talmud spoke about Tu B'shevav as the New Year of the Trees

But it was only about five hundred years ago that the Tsfat mystics wrote down a Tu B'shevav seder ritual that is designed to activate the inner Light of this auspicious day.

What a gift we have! The opportunity, in every generation, and in any place, to learn about the hidden divine messages of the trees, so that we can tap their power for true connection, growth and renewal.

We invite you to experience Tu b'Shevav as the mystics of old – with your body and heart, mind and spirit. Let the journey begin!

*Tu B'Shevav literally means the 15th of the Hebrew month Shevat. In the Jewish calendar, each month begins on the new moon. The 15th of each month is the full moon. In the heart of the winter, in the month of Shevat, in the light of the full moon we celebrate. It is this day (beginning in the night), that was designated to be the New Year of the Trees. For thousands of years it has been a Talmudic agricultural marking, calculating when fruit of a tree in the Land of Israel is permitted to eat. (Fruit is not eaten from a tree in Israel in its first 3 years.) The Talmud called it “the time when the sap rises”, giving coded hints to deeper meanings of Tu B'Shevav.

Welcome to the Tu B'Shevat Seder.

4 Worlds, 4 Bodies, 4 Elements

Four Worlds:

The Kabbalah speaks of four Worlds of the Creation. Just like there are many physical layers of the world; from the core of our earth, to the ground, to our atmosphere, solar system, our galaxy and the billions of galaxies outside of ours... So too, there are many spiritual planes of existence. Our mystics tell us that there are FOUR, to be specific. The higher worlds shine with more revealed G-dly light. And as we descend through the worlds, this light becomes more and more concealed and enclothed, finally crystalizing in the physical world where it seems that this light is almost entirely eclipsed.

Four bodies:





As human beings, we also have FOUR realms! The physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual. And, the same principal applies with us. In essence, we each have a soul that is literally a unique piece of G-d's infinite light. This is **my spiritual, essential self**. My thought, (**the mental realm**), though it expresses some of who I am, it only scratches the surface. When I open up and share with you what I am going through, (**the emotional**) you definitely receive a glimpse, but most of my experience remains concealed to you, even if I talk for an hour. And, when **physically**, I finally give you a hug, it is the moment of in one sense, mystery and concealment, but at the same time, ultimate connection and revelation. **It is because the physical most conceals the Divine, that it becomes the most powerful tool for revelation and connection.**

That is why the Tu B'shevat seder is all about eating! We set out a beautiful spread of wines, fruits and nuts. It is through the very physical act of eating and drinking, that we can align the four realms of our own being, and receive a little glimpse of the three higher, more exalted worlds above.

Fruits and Worlds:

And what is the connection between fruits and worlds, you may ask? Well, the word used in Kabbalah for a force that conceals Godliness is *klippa*, shell (by extension the term can also mean "pit"). Just like a shell simultaneously conceals and protects its fruit, so too, the many forms of *klippa* in my life, simultaneously hide and protect G-dliness. It's like when a guy I don't yet trust asks me for my number. When I don't give it to him, is because I am cruel? **No, I conceal so that I can protect the sacredness of my powers of connection.** The shell also *holds* the fruit, enabling us to access its juicy goodness. Just like my body "hides" who I am, (I am not my figure), yet when used in a sacred way, it enables one to access the "fruit" of divine experience.

4 Cities 4 Elements 4 Worlds

<p>Asiyah World of Doing /Action</p>  <p>Physical body Earth Hevron</p>	<p>Yetzirah World of Forming/Speech</p>  <p>Emotional body Water Tiberias</p>
<p>Briyah World of Creating/Thought</p>  <p>Mental body Air Tsfat</p>	<p>Atzilut World of Divine Nearness</p>  <p>Spiritual body Fire Jerusalem</p>

Before Starting the Seder, You Will Need the Following:

FRUIT:

- Fruit with an inedible shell/peel and edible inside like walnuts, pistachios, coconuts (have some in their shells and a nut cracker)
- Fruit with an edible peel and hard inner pit like olives, dates, apricots
- Fruit that are edible throughout like figs, grapes, apples, pears
- Fruit with fragrance like citrus

WINE OR GRAPE JUICE:

- Red
- White
- Rosé (optional)

How to use this seder:

After the introductory preface, you will travel through the four worlds, eating the appropriate fruit, and drinking the fitting wine for each. In each world, you will find a note describing the world with its constituent element and body.

Contemplation: How this world applies to me. Personal points to ponder.

“New Year” resolution: where we suggest practical advice for real deepening and growth on the New Year for the Trees.

Drink a “l’chaim!”: is a concluding blessing and "cheers" before moving on to the next world.

“Soul” Talk: is an excerpt from a special book called Innerspace, by Rabbi Kaplan, which is a clear description of the different parts of the soul. This part is for advanced learning, and not necessary part of the seder.

THE SEDER BEGINS



THE FIRST CUP OF WINE IS Poured: PURELY WHITE WINE

The seder begins with a blessing. It is gratitude and appreciation which nurtures us and enables abundance to manifest.

Who is rich is the one who rejoices with what he has.-Pirkei Avot
איזה הוא עשיר השמח בחלקו.

And one way to express gratitude is through the **physical body** (together with the other realms of our selves). We **lift** the cup of wine (use of hand), and we **vocalize** the following blessing (speech) and **have in mind** that the blessing covers all the wine we are to drink during the seder:

Blessed are You Master of all Reality (the Universe), Who creates the fruit of the vine.
ברוך אתה אדו-ני אלו-הינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן.
Baruch Ata Ado-nai Elo-haynu Melech haOlam Boray p’ree ha-gafen.

“As wine is drunk, secrets are revealed.” –Talmud

In Judaism, wine has the power to bring a person beyond the physical into the sacred or plummet one into the opposite (G-d forbid).

CHOOSE ONE FRUIT FROM THE SEVEN SPECIES OF ISRAEL;

Grape, date, pomegranate, olive, or fig. By choosing from amongst these fruits of Israel, we have intention that our soul connection to the Land of Israel is alive and vibrant.

The following blessing is said over the fruit, having in mind all the other tree **fruits** that will be eaten during the seder:

Blessed are You, Master of all Reality (the Universe), Who creates the fruit of the tree.

ברוך אתה אדו-ני אלו-הינו מלך העולם בורא פרי העץ

Baruch Ata Ado-nai Elo-haynu Melech haOlam, Boray p'ri ha'etz

1. THE PHYSICAL WORLD


Choose a fruit from the World of Doing (Asiyah in Hebrew). This world is represented by fruit that has hard outer shells with the fruit hidden inside:

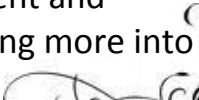
Almonds, walnuts, pistachios, pecans, chestnuts, coconuts...

The realm of **action** parallels the **physical** body and the **earth** element. It is this realm where the possibility of Divine concealment is greatest because it's the world farthest away from God's Infinite Light.

Crack open the nuts. Experience the process of getting to the "fruit".

The physical realm, the earth element, can "consume" us, making us feel disconnected from our Source. It can feel like a "tough nut" to crack through. Yet, this is the only way that we can tangibly actualize our highest self, for it is the World of Doing.

 **Contemplation:** *How do I relate to my physical body and physicality in general? Do I treat my body as sacred? Am I overly concerned about the externals? Do my actions reflect my inner ideals?*

"New Year" resolution: How can I cut out the extra externals that distract me from accessing truer aspects of myself, distract me from being more present and aware? How can I treat my body more respectfully? Which value can I bring more into action and how? 

Drink a "l'chaim!" to your new resolutions, blessing each other with success. We start with white wine because white represents loving kindness and compassion. In order to break through the tough barriers that seem to stop us from the start, we need pure abundant compassion from Heaven.

“Soul” Talk:

Each of the four Worlds also relate to a different aspect of soul. The physical world holds the level of soul called Nefesh.

“The lowest part of the soul interfaces with the physical body. This is the level where we are able to accept the spirituality that God desires to give us. It is on the level of Nefesh that a person gains an awareness of the body as a receptacle for the spiritual. This is only possible, however, when one is able to isolate himself from the constant stream of internal and external stimuli that occupies his thoughts. Awareness of the spiritual thus necessarily begins by quieting down the awareness of the physical. Before one is ready to experience the powerful Nefesh, which literally means “resting soul”. From Inner Space by R.Aryeh Kaplan

Before moving on to the next cup and up to the next World/realm, experiment with taking a moment of silence. One person should be the time keeper of 1-3 minutes of silence together. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and connect to the physical realm. What do you smell? What light do you see under your eye lids? What do you hear? Consciously relax the different parts of your body. Appreciate each.



POUR THE SECOND CUP: WHITE WINE MIXED WITH SOME RED

2. THE WORLD OF FORMATION

Choose a fruit from the World of Formation (Yetzirah in Hebrew).

This world is represented by fruits that have an edible outside and an inedible pit in the center:

Olives, dates, apricots, plums, persimmons...

The fruits of this world represent the realm of **speech**, which parallels the **emotional** realm, and the element of **water**. It is loftier than the previous world, asiyah/action, and therefore a world of greater revelation.

What are emotions? Our choice of reaction in any given situation forms our emotional reality. The sight of a beautiful meadow or a polluted path, the sound of a harsh word

or harmonious song, the taste of a fond familiar food, or the smell of rose, all stimulate unique responses in each of us.

And what is the pit? The pit reminds us that I am not my emotions. There is a layer hidden behind the emotional response. If we were to objectively observe our emotions, we would see that they are formed out of an unconscious, mysterious dimension, formed in childhood, in a previous incarnation... When our emotions are healthy, the unconscious dimension is merely a higher level of our true Self. When the emotions are less than healthy, they create “pit falls” in the stream of emotion. These “pits” come from old patterns of reaction, or misunderstandings or misinterpretations of our environment.

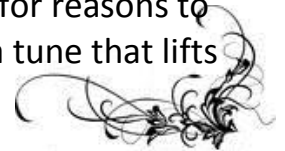


Contemplation: *Take a moment to recall an unhealthy emotion you are not happy about and would like to redirect (anger, jealousy, anguish, fear). Recall a situation that this emotion flared. Do not judge it. Just witness it, saying “hmmm”.*

Emotions are watery. Sometimes the best way to shift an emotion is not by ‘cutting’ it out (try cutting water), but to simply shift the stream of flow. Don’t take the negative emotion head on; instead try adding more positive emotion to dominate the emotional realm, shifting how the emotional realm flows.

“New Year” resolution:

Feel appreciation for the smallest things like the warm sun on your face, the warm smile from a neighbor, the opportunity to bring joy to a sad friend. Look for reasons to **say** thank you.... often. **Sing** songs that have positive messages, or **hum** a tune that lifts your spirits.



Drink a L’chaim of the white wine with a touch of red. Red comes from the side of judgment/discernment. By being aware of the “pits” that block us, we loosen the bind and allow a healthier flow. By choosing to respond positively, we create healthy ‘river banks’ for the flow of our emotions, deepening our capacity to connect to our Source.

“Soul” talk:

“The second level of the soul is Ruach, the “wind” blowing down to us from God’s breath. This “wind” is seen as the connection between God’s “mouth” as it

were. It is the Vav of the Divine Name which also denotes connection and transition.

When the air around us is at rest, are we aware of it? We are aware of air when there is a wind. Similarly we are aware of the sea of spirituality that surrounds us when we experience the level of Ruach, which is like a spiritual wind in motion. In this state of consciousness, information can be communicated; one can see visions, hear things and become conscious of higher levels of spirituality. Reaching the level of Ruach, one feels a **moving** spirit (flowing waters). rather than a quieting one.” From *Inner Space* by R. Aryeh Kaplan



POUR THE 3RD CUP OF WINE: RED WITH A TOUCH OF WHITE

3. THE WORLD OF CREATION

Entering the next World, choose fruit from the World of Creation, the realm of **thought**, the **mental** body, and the element of **air**. It is the world above yetzirah/formation, a world of more revelation.

These fruit are totally edible: *grapes, figs, apples, pears, raisins.*

As was mentioned in the beginning, each lower world is farther from the Infinite One and a more contracted manifestation of divine reality. During the seder we have been moving from the most distant world, farthest from the Infinite One. Here we are continuing to move up towards God’s Infinite Light, which parallels a movement towards our most essential selves.



Contemplation: *Here there are no shells or pits to block our direct experience with God. This of course happens if our thoughts are pure. How do we have pure thoughts, a purified power of imagination?*

A three step process helps us on the road to refinement of our thought. When I can move away from at best distracting and at worst, destructive patterns of thought, I can really begin to experience clear awareness of the Divine.

- 1) **Selflessness**- *I am not the center of the universe! The purpose of life so beyond me! I have a mission, and I want to fulfill it to the best of my capacity. Here I am!*
- 2) **Separation**- *With this healthy dose of humility, I can see more clearly which thoughts are strengthening for me and which are weakening. Separating out the negative, while focusing on positive thoughts, I open myself up to G-d's presence in the world, as He whispers to me words of guidance and encouragement. I now feel a real joy rising within me.*
- 3) *The third step is seeing that the **previous two steps are bound up together**. The more I submit (in a healthy way) the more my thinking is positive. The more I think positively about my mission in the world, the more I can hear my calling.- Loosely adapted from the works of R. Yitzhak Ginsberg*

“New Year” resolution:

Look for ways to be selfless. Find opportunities to do for the sake of others and not for self-interest. Separation: What ways of thinking that don't serve my greater self do I want to separate out, to prune from my “tree”? Focused intention: when something positive happens, focus awareness that it is Heaven sent. When something unpleasant happens, focus awareness that God is trying to bring you to a new place in yourself.



Drink a “l'chaim.” The wine is predominately red with a touch of white. Here the maturity of self, the self discipline which brings a richer Divine closeness is expressed in the red wine. The touch of white expresses the awareness that although I am so close, I am still aware that I am a separate entity and therefore in need of Divine intervention, whiteness.

“Soul” talk:

This is the level of Neshamah of soul. It is the experience of Divine breath. On this level you become aware not only of spirituality, but also its source. This is the difference between a breath and a wind (the lower realm of soul). Feeling a breeze on a summer day is pleasant, but it is very different than having someone you are very close to breathe down your neck; this bears a certain intimacy. Hence, the level of neshamah (World of Creation/Mind) is when a person gets to the level of a very close intimacy with God. From Inner Space by R. Aryeh Kaplan



POUR THE 4TH CUP OF WINE: ALL RED

4. THE WORLD OF NEARNESS

This is the World of Nearness, Atzilut in Hebrew, correlating to the element of **Fire** and **beyond thought**. Atzilut is fully absorbed in the Divine. It is referred to as Nothingness. No fruit can express it. It is beyond thought. It is essence. It is the fragrance of the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life. It is the super-conscious experience of the soul.

Torah wisdom teaches that the human senses are still affected today by their experience in the Garden of Eden. Their eyes saw that the fruit was good, their ears took bad advice, they touched the Tree (Eve did) and the fruit, and they ate it. The only sense that was not involved was the sense of smell.

It is through the sense of smell that can cut through it all and take us back to our essence. Therefore, at this stage of the seder, instead of eating, **we choose a fruit with fragrance**, like a citrus fruit.

A special blessing is made on a pleasant fragrant fruit:

“Blessed are You Master of all Reality(Universe), Who gives a good fragrance to fruit.”

ברוך אתה אדו-נוי קלו-הינו מלך העולם הנותן ריח טוב בפירות

Baruch Ata Ado-noy Elo-haynu Melech haOlam ha'Noten rayach tov b'payrot

Smell the fruit. Sit quietly.



Contemplation: *Life is a constant journey of becoming and expressing our true selves in an intimate living relationship with the Divine. It is a journey of healing ourselves and a healing of the World- Tikun Olam, the repair of the World. In this World of Nearness, we access our power to heal, to become, to repair ourselves and the world.*

*In Jewish mysticism the realm of super-consciousness is broken down into three distinct experiences: **faith, pleasure, and will**. In the process of healing, one must first **believe in God the Creator**, who heals all flesh and acts wondrously. One must then connect to the **innate pleasure of life** and the **will to be healed**.*

From Body, Mind, and Soul by R. Yitzhak Ginsberg



“Soul” talk:

The level of soul here is called Chayah. If you want to go further than Neshamah, what would be the next level beyond breath? Using the allegory of a glassblower, you have breath, the wind blowing down, and finally air settling and forming the vessel. What would come before the breath? The air when it is in the blower's lungs. The very life-force of the blower. This is what is called Chayah-Living Essence. From Inner Space by Aryeh Kaplan

Make a “I’chaim” with all red wine reflecting a full deep maturity of commitment to Relationship, blessing each other with increased faith, innate pleasure of Life and a strong will to be healed.....

You did it! You have completed your Tu B'shevat Seder.
Now, join hands, and do a little dance. As we dance we sing,
Next Year in Jerusalem!

Blessing you with an increased connection to your inner
Jerusalem, your inner sanctuary of peace, light and love!

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM, REBUILT, IN HER FULL LIGHT
FOR ALL TO EXPERIENCE!

Blessing After Wine

Blessed are You, Master of all Reality (Universe), for the vine and for the fruit of the vine, for the produce of the field, and for the precious, good, and spacious land which You have graciously given as a heritage to our ancestors, to eat of its fruit and to be satiated with its goodness. Have mercy, G-d, our G-d, on Israel Your people, on Jerusalem Your city, on Zion the abode of Your glory, on Your altar, and on Your Temple. Rebuild

Jerusalem, the holy city, speedily in our days, and bring us up to it and make us rejoice in it, and we will bless You in holiness and purity.

For You, G-d, are good and do good to all, and we offer thanks to You for the land and for the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are You, Master of all Reality (Universe) for the land and for the fruit of the vine.

Baruch Ata Ado-nai Elo-haynu Melech haOlam al ha gefen v'al pri ha gefen v'al tenuvat hasadeh v'al erez chemdah tovah orechevah shratzita v'hinchalta lavotanu lechol mpriah v'lisboah m'tuvah.

Rachem na Ado-nai Elo-hanu al Yisrael amcha v'al yerushalayim ircha v'al tzion mishkan cvodecha v'al mizbechcha v'al heichalecha u'venei yerushalayim ir ha kodesh bimhara byemenu v'halaneu ltocha v'simcha ba unverchecha b'kedusha u'tahara

ki ata ado-nay tov u'meitiv lcol v'nodeh lecha al ha'aretz v'al pri hagefen.

Baruch ata Ado-nai al ha aretz v'al pri hagefen.

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,

After grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, or dates:

(ו) על העץ
ועל פרי העץ

After wine or grape juice:

(ו) על הגפן
ועל פרי הגפן

After food prepared from the five grains:

על המזון
ועל הכלכלה

ועל תנובת השדה ועל ארץ חמדה טובה ורחבה שרצית והנחלת לאבותינו לאכול מפריה ולשבוע מטובה. רחם נא יי אלהינו על ישראל עמך ועל ירושלים עירך ועל ציון משכן כבודך ועל מזבחך ועל היכלך, וכנה ירושלים עיר הקדש במהרה בימינו, והעלנו לתובה ושמחנו בה ונברכך בקדשה ובטהרה.

ורצה והחליצנו ביום השבת הזה. — On Shabbat

וזכרנו לטובה ביום ראש החדש הזה: — On Rosh Chodesh

וזכרנו לטובה ביום חג המצות הזה: — On Pesach

וזכרנו לטובה ביום חג השבועות הזה: — On Shavuot

וזכרנו לטובה ביום חג הסוכות הזה: — On Sukkot

וזכרנו לטובה ביום שמיני עצרת החג הזה: — On Shemini Atzeret

וזכרנו לטובה ביום הזכרון הזה: — On Rosh Hashanah

בי אתה יי טוב ומטיב לכל ונודה לך על הארץ ועל

After grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, or dates:

(ועל) הפרות.

After wine or grape juice:

(ועל) פרי הגפן.

After food prepared from the five grains:

המזון.

ברוך אתה יי, על הארץ ועל

After grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, or dates:

(ו) הפרות:

After wine or grape juice:

(ועל) פרי הגפן:

After food prepared from the five grains:

המזון: