

*Blessed are You, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe,
who creates the fruit of the vine.*

In every seed there is the promise of new life. May we, in our lives, plant seeds of wisdom, friendship and peace.

לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה פְּרִי וְתַנוּבָה!

LE-SHA-NATO-VA U-VE-RA-CHAP'RI U-TE-NU-VA.

May the year be fruitful and blessed!



טו בשבט

There is a song from the Bible which compares the righteous person to a cedar tree. Let us sing it together:

*The righteous shall flourish like a date palm;
the righteous shall grow as tall as a cedar in Lebanon.*
(Psalm 92)

צְדִיק כַּתְּמָר יִפְרַח יִפְרַח, צְדִיק כַּתְּמָר יִפְרַח
צְדִיק כַּתְּמָר יִפְרַח יִפְרַח, צְדִיק כַּתְּמָר יִפְרַח
כְּאַרְז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגָה (2)
כְּאַרְז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגָה יִשְׁגָה

TZA-DIK KA-TA-MAR YI-F'RACH YI-F'RACH)2
TZA-DIK KA-TA-MAR YI-F'RACH)
K'E-REZ BA-L'VA-NON YIS-GEH (2)
K'E-REZ BA-L'VA-NON YIS-GEH YIS-GEH.

R. Elazar ben Azaryah said: One whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds is like a tree with many branches but few roots: the wind comes and plucks it up and overturns it. But one whose good deeds exceed his wisdom is like a tree with few branches but many roots: even if all the winds in the world come and blow upon it, it cannot be uprooted. May our learning lead to good deeds which improve our world.

Instead of eating fruit this time, we will plant seeds for the future, as Honi did. We will plant parsley seeds in the hopes that we will enjoy our harvest this Pesach. On Passover, we recall how God saved our ancestors from slavery in Egypt. Then we open the door for Elijah the prophet who, according to tradition, will herald the redemption of the whole world: the Messianic Age.

Wine is our symbol of joy. We rejoice in the goodness of the earth and in the fruit of the trees. We rejoice in our families and those with whom we share this Tu B'Shevat seder. We rejoice in the accomplishments and promise of the State of Israel. We rejoice in the dream of world peace. And we rejoice especially in the dream of the Messianic Age and pray that it will soon become a reality.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

BA-RUCH A-TAH A-DO-NAI, E-LO-HAY-NU ME-LECH
HA-O-LAM, BO-RAY P-RI HA-GA-FEN.

Together let us enjoy some of these fruits from around the world:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ.

BA-RUCH A-TAH A-DO-NAI, E-LO-HAY-NU ME-LECH
HA-O-LAM, BO-RAY P-RI HA-AYTZ.

*Blessed are You, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe,
who creates the fruit of the trees.*

It is a Jewish tradition for Jews around the world to send money to Israel on Tu B'Shevat to plant trees and help rebuild the Land. We will pass around a *tzedakah* box now and combine all our contributions to plant as many trees as we can.

The Fourth Cup: Wine

Our fourth cup is filled with wine, the fruit of the vine. We began with a story about Honi, who learned the importance of planting for the future. We end with a vision of the future.

Our people has always dreamed of a day when hatred and war will be forgotten; a day when no one will go hungry and no one will suffer homelessness; a day when we will all care for one another and live together in peace. Our sages called it the Messianic Age.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai taught that as important as the messianic age is, if you are planting a tree when someone tells you that the Messiah has arrived, you should finish your planting, and then go to greet the Messiah. Trees provide food and homes and warmth and shade. They contribute to the building of the Messianic Age.

We contribute to making the world a better place when we become the best people we can be. A tzadik, a righteous person, is often compared with the *erez*, the cedar tree, which grows tall, strong and proud. The cedar tree was used to panel the outside of the Temple in Jerusalem, a building dedicated to God's compassion and people's righteousness.

אַרְצָה עָלֵינוּ, אַרְצָה עָלֵינוּ, אַרְצָה עָלֵינוּ, (2)
בְּכֶר חֲרָשֵׁנוּ וְגַם זָרְעֵנוּ (2)
אֲכַל עוֹד לֹא קִצְרָנוּ (2)

AR-TZAA-LI-NU, AR-TZAA-LI-NU, AR-TZAA-LI-NU (2)
K'VAR CHA-RASH-NU V'GAM ZA-RA-NU (2)
A-VAL OD LO KA-TZAR-NU (2)

As we share the fruits of the Land of Israel and drink the juice of the oranges grown on land which used to be swamps, let us recall our bond with the people of the State of Israel:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ.

BA-RUCH A-TAH A-DO-NAI, E-LO-HAY-NU ME-LECH
HA-O-LAM, BO-RAY P-RI HA-AYTZ.

*Blessed are You, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe,
who creates the fruit of the trees.*

The Third Cup: Pineapple Juice

It is still winter here, but in the Land of Israel and elsewhere in the world, the rainy season is ending and the planting season is beginning.

Our third juice and our third plate of fruits come from around the world: bananas, coconuts, olives, apricots, pineapples. We will share some of them together today. They remind us of our obligation to Jews around the globe. We are our brothers' keepers.

Oil pressed from olives was used to keep the *Ner Tamid* (the Eternal Lamp) lit in the Temple in Jerusalem. It symbolizes the light of Jewish life, kept alive in small communities throughout the world.

With thanks that we are here celebrating Tu B'Shevat together, we sing:

How good and how pleasant it is when brethren live together!

הִנֵּה מָה טוֹב וּמָה נְעִים שֶׁבֶת אַחִים גַּם יַחַד.

HI-NAY MA TOV U-MA NA-YIM SHE-VET A-CHIM
GAM YA-CHAD.

The Second Cup: Orange Juice

On Tu B'Shevat, we especially eat fruits which grow in the Land of Israel, such as figs, dates, peaches, mangoes, pomegranates, almonds and oranges. We will share together some of these now and enjoy the sweet juice of oranges.

The Land of Israel is the birthplace of the Jewish people. More than 3000 years ago, God made a covenant with Abraham, promising to make him a great nation and to give his descendants *Eretz Yisrael*. The Land of Israel has been important to Jews ever since.

For many years there was a Jewish nation in the Land of Israel. Then for nearly 2000 years, although Jews lived there, others ruled the Land. Today, there is once again a Jewish nation in the Land of Israel, called the State of Israel. Her people are our people. We are brothers and sisters.

On Tu B'Shevat we remember the Eucalyptus tree with which the early Jewish pioneers of the Land of Israel — called *chalutzim* — drained the swamps 100 years ago. The Eucalyptus can absorb tremendous amounts of water and the *chalutzim* were able to reclaim many dunams of land by planting them.

The early *chalutzim* sang this song while they planted:

*We have come up to the Land,
we have tilled the soil and sown the seeds,
but we have yet to harvest our crop.*

The First Cup: Apple Juice

With our first cup of juice, we honor the apple tree which grows here in our own community. It reminds us of all our community offers us and of the importance of celebrating and learning with the Jews around us. Jews live in small communities throughout the world, taking care of one another and celebrating together.

Long ago, there lived a righteous man named Honi. One day he saw an old man planting a carob tree. Honi said to him: "Foolish man, do you think you will live to eat and enjoy the fruit of the tree you plant today? It will not bear fruit for many, many years."

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."

Honi sat down in the shade of a nearby tree to take a short nap. But his short nap lasted 70 years! When he awoke, he was surprised to see a full-grown carob tree where the old man had planted a seed just before Honi fell asleep. An elderly man was picking its fruit. "Are you the man who planted this tree?" asked Honi.

"No," replied the man. "My grandfather planted it for me." And so Honi learned the importance of planting seeds for future generations. Our Torah is called *Aytz Chaim*, the Tree of Life. Jews in every community plant seeds for future generations by passing on traditions and learning from parents to children, as we do here today.

Together we share and enjoy the sweetness of fruits which grow in our community and in communities throughout our country: apples, walnuts, raisins. May each Jewish community, like trees, nourish and shelter its members.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

BA-RUCH A-TAH A-DO-NAI, E-LO-HAY-NU ME-LECH
HA-O-LAM, BO-RAY P-RI HA-AYTZ.

*Blessed are You, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe,
who creates the fruit of the trees.*

Tu B'Shevat Seder

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We have joined together to celebrate the New Year of the Trees. Tu B'Shevat has long been a Jewish tradition, for Jews have always honored trees and appreciated the food, shade and shelter they provide. The custom of holding a Tu B'Shevat seder dates back to the Kabbalists who lived in Israel in the 16th century. Like them, we have gathered together to eat, sing and rejoice in the miracle of the tree.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

BA-RUCH A-TA A-DO-NAI E-LO-HAY-NU ME-LECH HA-O-LAM SHE-HE-CHE-
YA-NU VE-KI-YE-MA-NU VE-HI-GI-YA-NU LAZ-MAN HA-ZEH.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us and allowed us to reach this joyous occasion.

The Four Questions for Tu B'Shevat

1. Other new year celebrations honor people or events. Why do we have this special New Year to honor trees?
- 2.. On other days we eat all kinds of fruits. Why, on Tu B'Shevat, do we especially eat fruits from *Eretz Yisrael*, the Land of Israel?
3. Here, and in much of the world, it is still winter. Why do we talk about trees and planting now?
4. Since trees make their own seeds to reproduce, why do we celebrate trees by planting new seeds?