

# Shaarei Shamayim Tu B'shevat Haggadah

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The Kabbalists, Jewish mystics from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, believed that the world was made of four things - Earth, Water, Air, Fire. In the Tu B'shevat seder that they created, there were four worlds – *assiyah* (the world of action), *yetzirah* (the world of formation), *b'riyah* (the world of creation), and *atzilut* (the world of spirit).

We therefore have four sections of our seder to correspond to these worlds. We drink four cups of juice, and we eat different fruits and nuts to symbolize the different worlds we live in.

## The First World — *Assiyah*, the World of Action

### The first cup

The first cup of juice is for winter. The juice is white, like snow. With the first cup we think about the earth. We think about the importance of protecting nature and the land that we live on.

We say the blessing together:

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam borei p'ri hagafen.*

Blessed are You, Our God, Spirit of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

### Fruits/Nuts

The first fruit eaten at the Tu b'Shevat seder is hard on the outside, but soft on the inside. It has a hard shell or a tough skin. This symbolizes people who are hard on the outside, but soft on the inside.

As we eat the fruit of *Assiyah*, the physical world of action, may we be blessed with the courage to grow, to repair our world, and to help heal each other.

We say the blessing together:

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam borei p'ri ha'etz.*

Blessed are You, Our God, Spirit of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

### Story:

Once, a man named Honi the circle-maker was walking on the road. He saw an old man planting a carob tree, and he said to him: "How many years will it take for this tree to give fruit?" He answered: "Seventy years." Honi asked him, "Are you so healthy that you will live seventy years and eat its fruit? You will surely die by then." The man replied, "I found the world full of carob trees when I came into it, and as my fathers planted for me, so will I plant for my children." (Taanit 23A)

### Song: Hinei mah tov

*Hinei mah tov u'manayim shevet achim gam yachad.*

(How good it is for us to sit here together.)

## **The Second World — *Yetzirah*, the World of Formation**

### **The second cup**

The second cup of juice is for spring. We add a little bit of red juice to our white juice because as it gets warmer outside, there are new colors in the springtime. The red also wakes us up from the cold of winter.

*Yetzirah* teaches us about formation. God is the spark within us that leads us to feel, speak, and sing. With *yetzirah*, new things bloom in the springtime.

We say the blessing together:

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam borei p'ri hagafen.*

Blessed are You, Our God, Spirit of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

### **Fruits/Nuts**

We now eat fruits that are soft on the outside and hard on the inside. These usually have some kind of pit. This symbolizes people who are soft on the outside but hard on the inside.

We say the blessing together:

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam borei p'ri ha'etz.*

Blessed are You, Our God, Spirit of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

In *yetzirah*, we concentrate on water—our lakes, rivers, seas, and oceans. We can only survive on this planet if we have fresh, clean water to drink. Some people don't have this kind of water, which can make them very sick.

### **Song: Mayim**

*U-shavtem mayim b'sasson mimanay ha y'shu-ah (x2)*

*Mayim, mayim, mayim, mayim –hey mayim b'sasson (x2)*

*Hey hey hey hey*

*Mayim mayim mayim mayim mayim mayim b'sasson (x2)*

(With joy shall you draw water from the wells of deliverance.)

## **The Third World — *Briyah*, the World of Creation**

### **The third cup**

The third cup is for summer. We drink mostly red juice but add some white juice to it. In the summer months, most of the trees and flowers are in full bloom and we can harvest many fruits and vegetables. There is color everywhere. We say the blessing together:

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam borei p'ri hagafen.*

Blessed are You, Our God, Spirit of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

## **Fruits/Nuts**

We now eat fruits that we can just put into our mouths—they are soft the whole way through. Sometimes we eat figs for this world. The words of Torah are compared to a fig. As Rabbi Chiyya ben Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: “Whoever keeps the fig tree shall eat of its fruit. The fruit of the fig tree does not ripen all at once. The more one searches, the more figs one finds in it. So it is with the words of the Torah. The more one studies them, the more relish one finds in them.” (Eruvin 54, a,b) These fruits represent people who are good through and through, who do good deeds, and who study Torah.

As we eat the fruits of creation, may we all live with a creative spirit and in harmony with the world.

We say the blessing together:

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam borei p’ri ha’etz.*

Blessed are You, Our God, Spirit of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

*Briyah* is connected to air. When we take a deep breath we can breathe in the mystery of God and we can fill ourselves up with holiness.

## 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, and 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)

## **Song: It is a Tree of Life**

Shalom, shalom (4x)

Etz chayim hi' l'machazikim bah V'tomcheha Me'ushar

It is a tree of life to them who hold fast to it and all of its supporters are happy.

## **The Fourth World — *Atzilut*, the World of Spirit**

### **The fourth cup**

The fourth cup is for fall. This time we drink all red juice. The color is a deep red or purple, like the leaves on the trees. It reminds us that it will soon get cold and that farmers are harvesting our food and we are preparing for winter.

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.

We say the blessing together:

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam borei p'ri hagafen.*

Blessed are You, Our God, Spirit of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

We don't eat any fruits or nuts during this world, because there is no way for us to represent this world. It is pure spirit. We become aware of God's love and other realities perceived with our hearts, not our senses. Our hearts are full and we praise the Source which renews all creation.

Fire is connected to spirit. God appeared to Moses in a burning bush. On Shabbat we light candles and bring in a peaceful spirit for the evening and the rest of the following day. We end Shabbat with Havdalah and we light a twisted candle, which makes a large flame.

May the fire that we feel within us, the spark or the flame that leads us to make the world a better place, lead us to do *tikkun olam* and change the world.

### Story

God led Adam around the Garden of Eden and said, "Look at My works. See how beautiful they are, how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil or destroy My world—for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you." (Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7.13)

### **Song: Lo Yisa Goy**

*Lo yisa goy el goy cherev. Lo yil m'du od milchama (x4)*

And ev'ry one 'neath vine and fig tree shall live in peace and unafraid (x2)

And into plowshares beat their swords, nations shall learn war no more (x2)

<p>When, in your war against a city, you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the axe against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are the trees of the field human to withdraw before you under siege? Only trees that you know do not yield food may be destroyed; you may cut them down for constructing siege-works against the city that is waging war on you, until it has been reduced. (Deuteronomy 20:19-20)</p>	<p>When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest... but you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Eternal am your God. (Leviticus 19:9-20)</p>	<p>Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai ... used to say: if you have a sapling in your hand, and someone should say to you that the Messiah has come, stay and complete the planting, and then go to greet the Messiah. (Avot de Rabbi Nathan, 31b)</p>	<p>I can contemplate a tree. I can accept it as a picture.... I can feel it as a movement.... I can assign it to a species and observe it as an instance.... I can overcome its uniqueness and form so rigorously that I can recognize it only as an expression of law.... I can dissolve it into a number, into a pure relation between numbers, and externalize it. Throughout all of this the tree, the tree remains my object and has its time span, its kind and condition. But it can also happen, if will and grace are joined, that as I contemplate the tree I am drawn into a relation, and the tree ceases to be an It. (Martin Buber. I and Thou. 57-58)</p>
<p>Rabbi Shimon said, "the shade spread over us by these trees is so pleasant! We must crown this place with words of Torah." (Zohar, 2:127a)</p>	<p>Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai said, three things are of equal importance, earth, humans, and rain. Rabbi Levi ben Hiyyata said: ...this is to teach that without earth, there is no rain, and without rain, the earth cannot endure, and without either, humans cannot exist. (Genesis Rabbah, 13:3)</p>	<p>Moses Cordovero, author of a <i>Tu B'shvat Haggadah</i>, writes: "The principle of wisdom is to extend acts of love toward everything, including plants and animals." (Tomer Devorah, #3)</p>	<p>On Tu B'shvat when spring comes An angel descends ledger in hand and enters each bud each twig, each tree, and all our garden flowers. From town to town, from village to village the angel makes a winged way searching the valleys, inspecting the hills flying over the desert and returns to heaven. And when the ledger will be full of trees and blossoms and shrubs when the desert is turned into a meadow and all our land a watered garden the Messiah will appear (Shin Shalom, Israeli poet)</p>
		<p>It should not be believed that all the beings exist for the sake of the existence of humanity. On the contrary, all the other beings too have been intended for their own sakes, and not for the sake of something else. (Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, 456)</p>	