



HILLEL'S JOSEPH MEYERHOFF
CENTER FOR JEWISH LEARNING

Trees, Creation & Creativity

The Hillel Tu B'Shevat Seder
סדר ט"ו בשבט



Hillel

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Structure of the Tu B'Shevat Seder

The structure of the seder is familiar to us from Passover. Like Passover, it is framed by the drinking of four cups of wine, and like the Passover seder, there are many levels of symbolism embodied in these four cups. Each cup represents a different realm of creation in the kabbalists' understanding of the universe. It also represents a different season and base element. The themes embodied in these symbols lead us to examine many different elements of humanity's relation to trees.

In our Tu B'Shevat seder each cup, or world, is accompanied by eating fruit symbolic of that world and an activity that embodies the spirit of the world. As you go through the seder you will see the same basic structure to each of the four worlds. We begin by saying a blessing over the wine and then drinking it. Next there is a brief explanation of the fruit that represents the realm which we are in. The explanation is followed by a brief meditation taken from a classical midrash that elaborates on the nature of one of the fruits from this particular world. After the meditation is spoken, the nature of the fruit and what it represents is briefly contemplated, the blessing over the fruit is said and the fruit is eaten.

Then, after the blessing and meditation, a group ritual is suggested in lieu of more readings around the table. In this way, this Tu B'Shevat seder—when Tu B'Shevat either doesn't fall on Shabbat, or the seder is not celebrated on Shabbat—affords the possibility for engaging in creative activities that would be prohibited on Shabbat and Yom Tov.

This seder embodies a variety of rituals that represent the physical, the creative, the intellectual, and the ethereal. Generally for each realm several options are offered and one option can be chosen, or you can substitute the rituals suggested for one ritual of your own.

Below is a schematic for the four cups of wine and what they represent.

CUP	KABBALISTIC WORLD	SEASON	Base Element	WINE COLOR	FRUIT
First	Making - <i>Assiya</i>	Winter	Earth	All White	Inedible shell
Second	Formation - <i>Yetzira</i>	Spring	Water	White with a drop of red	Inedible inner pit
Third	Creation - <i>Beriah</i>	Summer	Air	Half white, half red	No shell or pit - whole thing is eaten
Fourth	Nobility - <i>Atzilut</i>	Fall	Fire	Red with a drop of white	None

How to Lead a Tu B'Shevat Seder

There is no right or wrong way to lead a Tu B'Shevat seder. The most important thing is that it be a meaningful and educational experience for students on your campus. Feel free to make whatever changes you feel will enhance the seder for students on your campus.

There is preparation required to make the seder successful. As the leader, it is important that you familiarize yourself with the seder and that you know how it will be performed on your campus. It will also be helpful to familiarize yourself with the holiday of Tu B'Shevat. Included as an appendix in this Leader's Guide is a brief history of Tu B'Shevat and its development.

Preparation

Food –

A major part of the preparation is acquiring fruit and wine or grape juice. There are four cups of wine/grape juice. You will need both white and red wine or grape juice. Along with each cup of wine, specific types of fruit are required. Decide which fruits you will use at your seder and make sure that there is enough for all participants. If possible, we encourage the use of fruit from Israel, or if Israeli fruit is not available, to use fruit that is grown in Israel.

Supplies –

Each cup of wine and fruit is also accompanied by one or more suggested rituals. It is important that you decide which rituals you will be doing in advance and to make sure that you have the appropriate supplies.

Participation

One key to a successful seder is to maximize the participation of all who attend. Many of the activities are designed to take place in small groups or to be done by each student. In addition to the activities, there are many natural points in the seder to allow different students to participate. One suggestion is to have a different student lead the blessing for each cup of wine and fruit that is eaten. Have different students introduce each cup and take turns leading the meditations and blessings. Be sure to coordinate with students in advance over who will do which part. Give them the seder in advance so they can practice their role. This will also avoid putting students on the spot and leaving them in potentially embarrassing situations if they are not comfortable leading the part assigned to them.

What to do When Tu B'Shevat Falls Out on Shabbat

Some of the activities outlined in the our Tu B'Shevat seder are not compatible with Shabbat observance. If Tu B'Shevat falls on Shabbat, or if your Hillel would like to observe Tu B'Shevat on Shabbat, there are adjustments that can be made.

The first thing to remember is that while Tu B'Shevat is an actual day in the calendar, the ideas that are expressed in the seder are true all days of the year. It is okay to hold the Tu B'Shevat seder on a day other than the 15th of Shevat.

Another strategy is to do what we do when Rosh Hashana falls on Shabbat. Jewish law prohibits blowing the Shofar on Shabbat. We therefore evoke the memory of Shofar blowing in our prayers by talking about the Shofar without actually blowing it. So too on Tu B'Shevat we can evoke a memory of the activities in the seder by studying about them without doing any activities forbidden on Shabbat.

Each activity is accompanied by at least one text and a description of the idea being conveyed in the activity. These can be used as text studies and discussion pieces.

A Word about Blessings – for the Halachically Sensitive

Blessings *Brachot*

Jewish law mandates that one say a blessing before eating any food. There are specific rules about blessings. One major concern is to avoid saying unnecessary blessings. Thus usually when we eat many different kinds of food that require the same blessing, we have intention that one blessing should cover all of the food that we will eat at one meal. The Tu B'Shevat seder is structured so that there are many times during the seder when fruits which have the same blessing are eaten and when we drink cups of wine. In order to avoid making unnecessary blessings one should have in mind that the blessing one says over one type of fruit or one type of wine is intended only for that food item. One should avoid snacking in between the different assigned times to eat and drink.

I. First World – עשיה Making First Cup

Pour a cup of white wine and say the following blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן:

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam Boreh peri ha-gafen.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe Who creates fruit of the vine.

Explanation of Assiya

The realm of *assiya* is the furthest from perfection in the Kabbalistic scheme. Symbolically, this realm requires the most protection, and therefore we eat fruits that have a shell on the outside – to protect them from the external elements. With this fruit and cup, then, we have a rooted awareness of the tangible world around us, in both its natural and human dimensions. We concentrate on our proper place in that world.

Meditation

מדרש רבה שיר השירים פרשה ו פסקה כו

אל גנת אגוז ירדתי מה אגוז זה את נוטל אחד מהכרי וכולן מדרדרין ומתגלגלים זה אחר זה כך הן ישראל לקה אחד מהן כולן מרגישין הה"ד (שם ט"ז) האיש אחד יחטא וגו'

"I went down to the nut grove..." (Song of Songs 6:11) Just as with nuts, if you remove one from the pile, all of them move and roll after each other. So too with Israel, if you hit one of them, they all feel it. (Song of Songs Rabbah 6:26)

Blessing and Eating Fruit

Fruits from the realm of *assiya* include pomegranates, almonds, walnuts, bananas, peanuts, etc. For most nuts and fruits for the world of *assiya* the blessing is the one that is said over fruits. Eat the fruit immediately after saying the blessing.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam Borei peri ha-etz

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe Who creates fruit of trees.

Some fruits that come from this realm are considered to come from the ground and not from trees (even though we may think of them as "tree-fruit"). Such fruits and nuts include bananas, and peanuts. For these fruits say the following blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam Borei peri ha-adama.

Blessed are You Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who creates fruit of the ground.

Ritual – Identifying With Fruit

As we celebrate the realm of *assiya* and all that it represents, let's peel off our metaphorical shells and share some of ourselves with the community that has gathered to celebrate Tu B'Shevat together. The Jewish tradition is full of sources that compare humans and human qualities to trees and to fruits. Break into groups and study the sources provided below. After looking at the sources talk with your group about what kind of fruit you most identify with.

SEE Appendix "FRUIT SOURCES"

Material Midrash

As a compliment to this text study and discussion, make a physical interpretation of the material you have learned and the fruit with which you identify, using a variety of the plastic media: paints, clay, markers etc...

Sidebar

Protecting Our World

Midrash *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 7:19

בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון נטלו והחזירו על כל אילני גן עדן ואמר לו ראה מעשי כמה נאים ומשובחין הן וכל מה שבראתי בשבילך בראתי תן דעתך שלא תקלקל ותחריב את עולמי שאם קלקלת אין מי שיתקן אחריך

When God created Adam, God took him around all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to him: "See how wonderful and praiseworthy all of my creations are. Everything I have created, I created for you. Be careful not to destroy My world; for if you destroy it, there is no one who will fix it after you.

We have symbolically removed our shells and opened up to those around us. As we celebrate Tu B'Shevat, however, it is important to be wary of the trees and fruits that need protection from the physical world. The protective shells that nature has provided them do not suffice to protect them from humanity. The statistics about the damage that humanity is causing to the natural world are daunting. Visit the websites of the organizations listed below for more information on environmental issues and what you can do to help.

*Every day, an estimated 100 plant and animal species go extinct as a result of deforestation.

-National Wildlife Federation (www.nwf.org)

*On average, humans put 16 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every 24 hours. This is the equivalent of 150 major volcanic eruptions per year – of which a quarter would be located in the United States.

-Onesweetwhirled.org

*Only 5% of the world's surface is in national protected areas. These include nature reserves, national parks, monuments, habitat and wildlife management areas, and protected landscapes.

-Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (www.coejl.org)

Blessing and Eating Fruit

Take one of the fruits from the realm of formation. Fruits include olives, dates, cherries, plums, apricots, etc. and say the following blessing

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam Borei peri ha-etz

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe Who creates fruit of trees.

Ritual – Planting Our Seeds

With this cup we focus on the pit of the fruit, which we normally throw away and don't pay any attention to. We recognize that the pit is a means for re-growth and it is through the pit that there is fruit and produce for the next generation. Rabbinic literature talks of the importance of planting trees.

מדרש תנחומא קדושים פרק ח
כי תבואו אל הארץ ונטעתם אמר להם הקב"ה לישראל אע"פ שתמצאו אותה מליאה כל טוב לא
תאמרו נשב ולא נטע אלא הוּו זהירין בנטיעות שנאמר ונטעתם כל עץ מאכל כשם שנכנסתם ומצאתם
נטיעות שנטעו אחרים אף אתם היו נוטעים לבניכם שלא יאמר אדם אני זקן כמה שנים אני חי מה
אני עומד מתיגע לאחרים למחר אני מת

When you enter the land and plant any tree for food...(Lev. 19:23) God said to Israel, "Even though you will find [the land] full of good, you shouldn't say 'we will sit and not plant.' Rather, be careful to plant." As it says, you shall plant any tree for food. Just as you entered the land and found trees that others had planted, so too you should plant for your children. A person shouldn't say, 'I am old; how much longer will I live? Why should I toil for others when I may die tomorrow?' (Midrash Tanchumah, Kedoshim 8)

Ritual A – Planting

Having examined the value of planting, let us now plant our own seeds.

Decorate flower pots and plant parsley. The parsley should be ready by Passover and can be used at your Passover seder. As an alternative to parsley, plant flowers or any other herbs.

Note: If you are doing your Tu B'Shevat seder on Shabbat, this activity is not in line with Shabbat observance.

Ritual B – Dream Mapping

See Appendix "Dream Mapping Sources"

Sidebar

Trees: The Ultimate Zionist Ideal

A common Tu B'Shevat activity is to have a tree drive for Israel. Trees can be purchased to be planted in one of the JNF (Jewish National Fund) Forests in Israel. Tree planting was an integral part to the Zionist cause in settling the land of Israel from the late 19th Century. Planting trees was seen as a necessary ritual in order to connect to the land. Trees were an essential symbol for the Zionist mission of "striking roots" in the Jewish homeland. In keeping with the notion of planting trees as a means to establishing a legacy expressed in the Midrash, it became a common practice to plant trees in memory of loved ones. Forests planted in memory of those who have died establish their legacy and serve as an effective continuity between the past and the future.

The powerful and explicit example of this can be seen in the announcement of the Holocaust Martyrs' Forest in Jerusalem:

The memory of our six million holy ones will be eternalized in the trees which will be planted in the earth closest to the heart of each and every Jew [i.e., Jerusalem]. Their names will be sanctified for eternity by the tree which is renewed time after time with the passing of the year. 'The Forest of the Holy Ones' will rise in the Judean Hills at the entrance of the capital of Israel and thus will serve as a practical contribution to the resuscitation of this important area.

Planting trees remains a vital part of Israel's development and sustenance. Through the efforts of JNF, which has planted over 210 million trees, **Israel is the only country in the world that has more trees at the end of the 20th Century than it did at the beginning.** For more information on the JNF, trees and other environmental concerns, and to plant a tree in Israel visit www.jnf.org

III. Third World - *בריאה* Creation

Third Cup

Pour a cup of wine that is half red and half white, and say the blessing over wine.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי הגפן:

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam Boreh peri ha-gafen.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe Who creates fruit of the vine.

Explanation of *Beriah*

In the third realm, Creation, the tree has grown into a full being and is blooming. No protective shells are needed within or without. The fruit of the realm of Creation has no shell or pit, and may be eaten as is. This realm is the realm of intellect. Fruits from this realm include: grapes, figs, apples, citrons, lemons, pears, quinces, and carob.

Meditation

תלמוד בבלי מסכת עירובין דף נד/א-ב
אמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר רבי יוחנן מאי דכתיב נוצר תאנה יאכל פריה למה נמשלו דברי
דברי תורה כתאנה מה תאנה זוכל זמן שאדם ממשמש בה מוצא בה תאנים אף דברי תורה כל זמן
שאדם הוגה בהן מוצא בהן טעם

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan. What is the meaning of the verse, "He who tends a fig tree will enjoy its fruit...?" Why are the words of Torah compared to a fig? Just as a fig tree, as long as someone examines it, one will find figs, so too with the words of Torah, as long as someone meditates on them, one will find new insights. (Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 54a-b)

Blessing and Eating Fruit

Take one of the fruits from the world of Creation and say the following blessing:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹיָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam Borei peri ha-etz

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe Who creates fruit of trees.

Some berries, such as strawberries also come from this realm. The blessing for most berries is the following:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הוֹיָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam Borei peri ha-adama.

Blessed are You Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who creates fruit of the ground.

Ritual – "Trees, Life & War" A Tu B'Shevat Talmud Page

Since this is the realm of intellect, we will take some time to study Jewish texts about humanity's relationship to trees. There is a verse in the Bible that compares humans to trees: "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 ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city." As you will see, Biblical commentators disagree over how to read this verse.

Break into groups of 3 or four and take some time to study and discuss the sources on the Talmud page. If you would like, you can use the navigator sheet to help guide your study.

See Appendix “Trees, Life, & War A Tu B’Shevat Talmud Page” and “Trees, Life, & War A Tu B’Shevat Talmud Page Navigator”

Sidebar

Tikkun Olam and Why So Many Blessings

The most popular branch of Kabala was inspired by Rabbi Isaac Luria. According to Lurianic Kabala, the world came into being as a result of an over-concentration of Divine energy. The vessels that contained Divine energy shattered, and sparks of the Divine are everywhere in the world. The goal of Lurianic Kabala is to mend the breaking of the vessels in an act called *tikun olam*, or fixing of the world, by redeeming the divine sparks. *Tikun olam* depends on the intention that one has while doing an action. Thus the intention, or *kavanah*, that one has when performing a mitzvah or reciting a blessing is crucial. It was with this fact in mind that the Tu B’Shevat seder includes so many blessings over various fruits.

IV. Fourth World - אצילות Nobility

Fourth Cup

The fourth cup of wine is all red with a drop of white. It symbolizes complete development and ripeness. Say the blessing over wine:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam Boreh peri ha-gafen.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe Who creates fruit of the vine.

Explanation of *Atzilut*

There is no fruit associated with this cup. The world of nobility represents pure spirituality and it cannot be embodied in anything physical. You may want to have fragrant spices or fruits to smell. This allows us to be aware of our senses beyond that of test and feeling.

Blessing for Fragrant Spices and Fruits

There is a blessing recited over smelling spices and fruits that are particularly fragrant.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מֵיַיִ בְּשָׂמִים

Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam Boreh minei besamim

Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe Who creates different types of spices.

Ritual – Meditation

Meditation allows us to connect to that which is beyond us, and to gain a sense of the world of nobility.

Begin the meditation by teaching a *niggun*. (A *niggun* is a wordless melody). Once everyone knows the *niggun* tell them to hum it in the background as the meditation continues. Allow them to hum it for a little bit to set the mood.

Tell everyone to concentrate on a pleasant memory that they experienced in the outdoors or in nature.

Once that memory is set in their head, tell them to concentrate on the verse *ki ha-adam etz hasadeh*, “is man the tree of the field?” and the text study that we did in the previous cup.

After concentrating on the verse tell the participants to think back to the first cup and the tree with which they identify. Tell them to picture the tree, to imagine feeling it, and to imagine picking a piece of fruit off of the tree. The fruit is ripe and ready for eating. Now tell them to imagine eating the fruit. Feel the texture in their mouth and taste the rich flavor. Savor the flavor as the fruit moves down their throat.

Now that they have eaten the fruit and experienced the tree with which they identify, ask them “how can you be the tree? How can you be that fruit?” Let them think about this for a few moments.

Conclude the meditation by singing the *niggun* loudly and with great intensity.

Conclusion

We have now completed the Tu B'Shevat seder. Tu B'Shevat allows us to think about our relationship to trees and the physical world around us. It also allows us to think about our social responsibility to the environment, to the world, and to the future. Tu B'Shevat introduces us to the Kabbalistic understanding of the world and of God. Tu B'Shevat also allows us to concentrate on the land of Israel and its fruits.

Feel free to continue the seder for as long as you like. You may want to continue discussing topics that were touched upon already, or raise new topics and issues. Also, everyone should feel free to eat whatever fruits they want. When everyone is finished eating, there are traditional blessings that are said after eating. In addition to the *Birkat Hamazon* with which many of us are familiar, and which is said only after partaking of a meal that includes bread, there are also concluding blessings that are said after eating snacks or a meal that does not contain bread. After eating grain products that are not bread, wine, and/or one of the fruits for which Israel is praised in the Bible (grapes, figs, dates, olives, pomegranates) the following concluding blessing, known as *Al Ha-Mechiya* is said:

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam

On wine—al hagefen ve-al peri ha-gefen

On fruits – al ha-etz ve-al peri ha-etz

On grain products – al ha-mechiya

On grain products and wine – al ha-mechiya ve-al ha-kalkalah ve-al peri ha-gefen

Ve-al tenuvat ha-sadeh ve-al eretz chemda tovah

u'rechavah sheratzita ve-hinchalta la-avoteinu le-

echol mipiryah ve-lisboah mituvah. Rachem na

Adonai Eloheinu al Yisrael amecha ve-al Yerushalayim

irecha ve'al tzion mishkan kevodecha ve'al

mizbachecha ve'al heichalecha, u'veneh

Yerushalayim ir ha-kodesh bi-meheira beyameinu ve-

ha'aleinu le-tochah ve-samcheinu be-vinyanah ve-

nochal mi-piryah, ve-nisba mituvah u-nevarechecha

alehah bi-kedusha u-vetoharah

On Shabbat add – u-retzeh ve-hanchileinu be-yom ha-Shabat ha-zeh

Ki Ata Adonai tov u-meitiv la-kol, ve-nodeh lecha al

ha-aretz ve-al

On wine – peri gafnah. Baruch Ata Adonai al ha-aretz ve-al peri gafnah.

On fruits – peirotehah. Barch Ata Adonai al ha-aretz ve-al perotehah.

On grain products – ha-mechiya. Baruch Ata Adonai al ha-aretz ve-al ha-mechiya.

On grain and wine – ha-mechiya ve-al peri ha-gefen.

Baruch Ata Adonai al ha-aretz ve-al peri gafnah.

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם על:

על היין - על הגפן ועל פרי הגפן:

על פירות משבעת המינים - על העץ ועל פרי העץ:

על מזונות - על המחיה ועל הכלכלה:

על מזונות ויין ביחד - על המחיה ועל הכלכלה ועל הגפן ועל הגפן:

ועל תנובת השדה ועל ארץ חמדה טובה ורחבה שרצית והנח

לאבותינו לאכל מפריה ולשבוע מטובה, רחם (נא) יהוה אלהינו

ישראל עמך ועל ירושלים עירך ועל ציון משכן כבודך ועל מזב

ועל היכלך, ובנה ירושלים עיר הקדש במהרה בימינו והעלנו לתו

ושמחנו בבנינה ונאכל מפריה ונשבוע מטובה ונברכך עליה בקד

יבטרה:

בשבת:

ורצה והחליצנו ביום השבת הזה:

כי אתה יהוה טוב ומטיב לכל ונודה לך על הארץ ועל:

על היין - פרי גפנה:

ברוך אתה יהוה על הארץ ועל פרי גפנה:

על הפירות - פרותיה:

ברוך אתה יהוה על הארץ ועל פרותיה:

על מזונות - המחיה:

ברוך אתה יהוה על הארץ ועל המחיה:

על מזונות ויין ביחד - המחיה ועל פרי הגפן:

ברוך אתה יהוה על הארץ ועל הכלכלה ועל פרי גפנך

Blessed are You, Hashem our God, Sovereign of the universe,

On grain – for the nourishment and the sustenance

On wine – for the vine and the fruit of the vine *On fruit* – for the tree and the fruit of the tree

On grain and wine – for the nourishment and the sustenance and for the vine and the fruit of the vine

And for the produce of the field; for the desirable land that You were pleased to give our forefathers as a heritage, to eat of its fruit and to be satisfied with its goodness. Have mercy, Hashem, Our God, on Israel Your people; on Jerusalem Your city; on Zion, the resting place of Your glory; on Your Altar, and on Your Temple. Rebuild Jerusalem, the holy city, speedily in our days. Bring us up into it and gladden us in its rebuilding and let us eat from its fruit and be satisfied with its goodness and bless You upon it in holiness and purity

On Shabbat – and be pleased to let us rest on this Shabbat day

On Rosh Chodesh – and remember us for goodness on this day of Rosh Chodesh

For You, Hashem, are good and do good to all, and we thank You for the land

On grain products – and for the nourishment. Blessed are You, Hashem, for the land and for the nourishment.

On wine – and for the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, Hashem, for the land and for the fruit of the vine.

On fruits – and for the fruit. Blessed are You, Hashem, for the land and for its fruits.

On wine and grain – and for the sustenance and for the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, Hashem, for the land and for the sustenance and for the vine and for the fruit of the vine.

After eating any food for which *Birkat hamazon* or *al ha-mechiya* is not said, the following blessing is recited.

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech
ha-olam boreh nefashot rabot ve-
chesronan al kol mah she-barata le-
hachayot bahem nefesh kol chai
baruch chei ha-olamim.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא נַפְשוֹת רַבּוֹת
וְחִסְרוֹנָן עַל כָּל מַה שֶּׁבָרָא לְהַחַיּוֹת בָּהֶם נֶפֶשׁ כָּל חַי בְּרוּךְ
חַי הָעוֹלָמִים

Blessed are You, Hashem our Lord, sovereign of the universe, Who creates numerous living things with their deficiencies; for all that You have created with which to maintain the life of every being. Blessed is He, the life of the worlds.

Appendix A

History of Tu B'Shevat

Humanity's relationship to nature in general and to trees in particular has always been complicated. This relationship has led to a myriad of different responses, ideologies, and movements. The Tu B'Shevat seder is a yearly chance to reexamine that relationship on different spheres.

Tu B'Shevat is first recorded as a date of significance in the Mishnah. According to the House of Hillel it marks the new year for trees. Jewish law recognizes four different new years. The existence of four new years shows an awareness and sensitivity to the fact that humans operate in many different time cycles and rhythms. We feel this as students when we have to navigate the academic, Jewish, and Gregorian calendars. Tu B'Shevat, the new year for trees delineates years for the agricultural tithing cycle. Depending on the year of a seven-year cycle, a different type of tithe had to be given. These laws apply only in the Land of Israel.

After the destruction of the Temple and expulsion of Jews from Israel, Tu B'Shevat was a relatively dormant holiday until it was developed by the kabbalists living in 16th Century Safed. Trees and nature play an important part in the kabbalistic understanding of the world. In the kabbalist mindset, there are many worlds, of which ours is the lowest and most distanced from God. Although each world is characterized by an increasing degree of opacity that veils its divine root, all worlds share a common underlying structure. Thus contemplation of any world can lead to knowledge of the structure of the ultimate theosophical realm. Nature is perhaps the richest symbol available to the kabbalists to provide insight into the Divine realm. Unlike philosophers, for whom nature allows for an appreciation of God, the kabbalists believe that nature is a symbolic representation of the hidden divine realm.

According to kabbalistic doctrine, our world exists as a result of constantly flowing divine energy, which is channeled through ten emanations. Additionally, there are four "worlds", or realms, through which our universe exists. They are: nobility, creation, formation and doing. These worlds provide linkage between our own universe and God.

Appendix A – History of Tu B'Shevat

Each world contains different elements, all of which are present in our universe. Thus the highest world, nobility, is as close to God as possible. It is pure spirituality. The next world, creation, begins to have physical aspects and materials. In the third world, formation, the materials are formed. The fourth world, the world of doing, combines all of the elements of the upper worlds to make the universe as we know and experience it.

The significance of trees and nature to Jewish life was reexamined again with the advent of Zionism and the settling of the land of Israel at the end of the 19th century. Picking up on the fact that Tu B'Shevat already exists in the Jewish calendar as a day focused on trees, and the practical need to develop the land of Israel to make it habitable, Tu B'Shevat was adopted as a national arbor day. Jewish school children living in Israel would plant trees to commemorate the day. Jews not living in Israel would hold fundraising drives and tree campaigns.

More recently, with the rise of the environmentalist movement and an awareness of the earth's vulnerability, Tu B'Shevat has been adopted by Jewish environmentalists as a day to examine what Judaism has to say about protection of the earth and of nature.

As we gather to celebrate Tu B'Shevat, all of the elements describe above converge to inform our seder and observation of the day.

Appendix B Identifying With Fruit

In its praise of the land of Israel, the Torah lists seven specific fruits. Deuteronomy 8:8 calls Israel, “A land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and [date] honey.” These fruits have a special place in Jewish tradition and are known as the “seven species.” Our first sources look at some Rabbinic commentaries on these fruits.

Wheat

מדרש רבה שיר השירים פרשה ז פסקה ח
בטנך ערמת חטים והלא של איסטרובילין יפה משל חטים אלא איפשר לעולם להיות בלא איסטרובילין ואי
איפשר לעולם להיות בלא חטים... ארשב"ל מה חטים הללו פסולת שלהם נמדדות עמהם כך ישראל
(דברים כ"ט) מחוטב עציך עד שואב מימך אמר ר' יצחק מה חטים הללו כשהן יוצאין לזרע אינן יוצאין
אלא במנין וכשנכנסין מהגורן נכנסין במנין כך כשירדו ישראל למצרים ירדו במנין שנא' (שם י') בשבעים
נפש ירדו אבותיך מצרימה וכשעלו עלו במנין שנא' (שמות י"ב) כשש מאות אלף רגלי...
ח

Your belly like a heap of wheat... Are not pine cones nicer than wheat? Only that it is possible to exist without pinecones and it is impossible to exist without wheat... Rabbi Shimon ben Levi says just as the wheat's inedible parts are measured with it, so too Israel, as it says “From the woodchopper to the one who draws water” (Deut. 29:10). Rabbi Yitzchak says, just as wheat is only planted in clusters, and when it comes from the granary it comes in clusters, so too when Israel descended to Egypt they went down in clusters, as it says “Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons in all” (Deut. 10:22). And when they left Egypt they left in clusters, as it says, “about six hundred thousand men on foot” (Exodus 12:37)...
(Song of Songs Rabbah 7:8)

1. Why is it praiseworthy to have the refuse measured with the wheat?
2. Why is Israel always found in large numbers? What does this say about the value of community?

Barley

תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף קמ"ב
ואמר רב חסדא האי מאן דאפשר ליה למיכל נהמא דשערי ואכל דחיטי קעבר משום בל תשחית ואמר רב פפא האי מאן דאפשר
למישתי שיכרא ושתי חמרא עובר משום בל תשחית

Rav Chisda says: Anyone who can eat bread made from barley and instead eats bread made of wheat has violated the prohibition against being wasteful. Rav Papa says one who can drink beer and instead drinks wine has violated the prohibition against being wasteful. (Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 140b)

1. According to this passage, how is the prohibition against being wasteful understood?

Appendix B – Identifying with Fruit

2. How does this source correspond with your understandings of how not to be wasteful?

Grapes

מדרש רבה שמות פרשה מד פסקה א
...מה הגפן היא חיה ונשענת על עצים מתים כך ישראל הם חיים וקיימים ונשענין על המתים אלו האבות
וכן אתה מוצא כמה תפלות התפלל אליהו בהר הכרמל שתדד האש כמד"א (מלכים א יח) ענני ה' ענני ולא
נענה אלא כיון שהזכיר את המתים ואמר ה' אלהי אברהם יצחק וישראל מיד נענה וכן משה בשעה שעשו
ישראל אותו מעשה עמד ולמד עליהם זכות מ' יום ומ' לילה ולא נענה אלא כיון שהזכיר את המתים מיד
נענה שנאמר זכור לאברהם ליצחק ולישראל מה כתיב וינחם ה' על הרעה הוי כשם שהגפן הזאת חיה
ונשענת על עצים מתים כך ישראל חיים ונשענים על האבות כשהם מתים הוי זכור לאברהם ליצחק
ול ישראל:

Just as a grape vine is alive while being supported by dead trees, so too Israel lives is sustained by and leans on the dead for support, i.e., the patriarchs. Thus you find with Elijah, that he prayed several prayers on Mt. Carmel and wasn't answered until he mentioned the patriarchs. As soon as he mentioned the dead, and said: "Lord, the God of Abraham Isaac and Israel..." he was immediately answered. Similarly with Moses, when the Children of Israel committed the sin of the Golden Calf, he stood and learned in their merit forty days and forty nights, and was not answered. As soon as he mentioned the dead, he was answered immediately, as it says, "Remember for Abraham, for Isaac and for Israel." Just as the grape vine lives and is supported by dead trees, so too Israel lives and is supported by the patriarchs. (Exodus Rabbah 44:1)

1. How do the dead patriarchs help and support the Jews?

מדרש רבה ויקרא פרשה לו פסקה ב
מה גפן זו יש בה יין ויש בה חומץ זה טעון ברכה וזה טעון ברכה כך ישראל חייבין לברך על הטובה ועל
הרעה על הטובה ברוך הטוב והמטיב על הרעה ברוך דין האמת

Just as the grape has in it wine and vinegar, and each one of them requires a different blessing, so too Israel must make a blessing for the good and for the bad. On the good they say, "Blessed is the One Who is good and Who does good." On the bad they say, "Blessed is the true judge." (Leviticus Rabbah 36:2)

1. Why must we make a blessing for the bad?
2. Is it possible to make a blessing for the bad in our lives?

Figs

Proverbs 27:18
נִצֵּר תֵּאֱנָה יֹאכֵל פְּרִיָּהּ וְשִׁמְרָ אֶדְנָיו יִכְבֹּד:

He who tends a fig tree will enjoy its fruit, and he who cares for his master will be honored.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת עירובין דף נד-א-ב

Appendix B – Identifying with Fruit

אמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר רבי יוחנן מאי דכתיב נוצר תאנה יאכל פריה למה נמשלו דברי תורה כתאנה מה תאנה זו כל זמן שאדם ממשמש בה מוצא בה תאנים אף דברי תורה כל זמן שאדם הוגה בהן מוצא בהן טעם

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan. What is the meaning of the verse, “He who tends a fig tree will enjoy its fruit...?” Why are the words of Torah compared to a fig? Just as a fig tree, as long as someone examines it, one will find figs, so too with the words of Torah, as long as someone meditates on them, one will find new insights. (Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 54a-b)

1. Why is Torah compared to a fig tree?
2. What does this text teach about the value of study?
3. Can one ever “complete” one’s studies?

Pomegranate

מדרש רבה שיר השירים פרשה ד פסקה ד
כחוט השני שפתותיך בשעה שאמרו את השירה (שם ט"ו) אז ישיר משה ומדברך נאוה שמראין באצבע ואומרים (שם) זה אלי ואנוהו באותה שעה התחיל משה משבחן כפלח הרמון רקתך הריקן שבכם רצוף מצות כרמון הזה אין צריך לומר מבעד לצמתך על הצנועין והמצומתין שבכם:

Your lips are like a crimson thread (Song of Songs 4:3). When the Children of Israel sang the song by the sea...Moses began to praise them: *The brow behind your emptiness gleams like a pomegranate split open*. Even the “empty” among you is full of *mitzvot* like a pomegranate. *Behind your veil...* (Ibid: 1) There is no need to compliment the modest and distinguished ones among you.” (Song of Songs Rabbah 4:4)

1. Why are the “empty ones” compared to a pomegranate?

Olives

Jeremiah 11:16

זֵית רֵעֵנָן יִפָּה פְּרֵי תֵאֵר קָרָא יְהוָה שְׂמֶנְךָ לְקוֹל הַמּוֹלָה גְדֹלָה הֵצִית אֵשׁ עָלֶיהָ וְרָעוּ דְלִיּוֹתָיו:

The Lord named you “Verdant olive tree, Fair, with choice fruit.” But with a great roaring sound He has set it on fire.

Rabbi David Kimhi, Radak, (1160-1235, France)

זית רענן - המשילה לזית לפי שהוא רענן כל זמן וכל ימות השנה עליו לחים:

It is compared to an olive tree because it is always vibrant, and its leaves are moist all days of the year.

מדרש תנחומא ישנה, תצוה א
שמן זית, הנך יפה עינים יונים, אמר להם הקב"ה דוגמא שלך דומה ליונה כו', כיצד כשהיה נח בתיבה, מה כתיב וישלח את היונה וגו' ותבוא אליו היונה לעת ערב והנה עלה זית טרף בפיה, אמר להם הקב"ה מה היונה הביאה אורה לעולם, אף אתם נמשלתם ליונה, הביאו שמן זית והדליקו לפני, שנאמר ואתה תצאה את בני ישראל ויקחו אליך שמן זית.

Appendix B – Identifying with Fruit

Olive oil [The Menorah in the Temple must be lit with olive oil]. “Ah, you are fair my darling, Ah, you are fair with your dove-like eyes” (Song of Songs 1:15). God said to the Children of Israel, your image is similar to the dove. How is this so? When Noah was in the Ark it says “He sent the dove...The dove came back to him toward evening, and there in its bill was a plucked-off olive leaf” (Genesis 8:8, 11). God said to the Children of Israel: Just as the dove brought light to the world, so you are compared to the dove. Bring olive oil and light it before Me, as it says, “Command the Children of Israel and they bring you olive oil” (Exodus 27:20). (Tanchuma Yeshana, Tetzaveh 1)

מדרש תנחומא תצוה פרק ו
שמן זית זך כתית למאור למה לא שמן אגוזים ולא שמן צנונות ולא שמן דגים או שאר שמנים אלא שמן
של זית לפי שהזית סימן אור לעולם

Clear oil of beaten olives for lighting (Exodus 27:20) – Why must the Menorah be lit with olive oil and not oil from nuts, fish, or other oils? Because the olive is a symbol of light for the world. (Tanchuma, Tetzaveh 1)

1. How can the Children of Israel be like olive oil?
2. How do we “bring light to the world”?

Dates

Psalms 92:13-16

צדיק כַּתְּמָר יִפְרַח כְּאַרְז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגָה: שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית יְהוָה בְּחִצְרוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ: עוֹד יִנּוּבוּן בְּשִׁיבָה
דְּשָׁנִים וְרַעֲנָנִים יִהְיוּ: לְהַגִּיד כִּי יֵשֶׁר יְהוָה צוּרֵי וְלֹא עוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ:

The righteous boom like a date palm; they thrive like a cedar in Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they flourish in the course of our God. In old age they still produce fruit; they are full of sap and freshness, attesting that the Lord is upright, my rock, in whom there is no wrong.

1. Why are the righteous compared to a date palm? To a cedar tree?
2. Is old age considered a virtue in these verses? What advantages does it have?

The “Seven Species” are not the only fruits that grow in Israel, nor are they the only fruits that our Rabbis commented on. Below is a sampling of other Rabbinic commentaries on various fruits.

Nuts

מדרש רבה שיר השירים פרשה ו פסקה כו
אל גנת אגוז ירדתי מה אגוז זה את נוטל אחד מהכרי וכולן מדרדרין ומתגלגלים זה אחר זה כך הן ישראל
לקה אחד מהן כולן מרגישין הה”ד (שם ט”ז) האיש אחד יחטא וגו’

“I went down to the nut grove...” (Song of Songs 6:11) Just as with nuts, if you remove one from the pile, all of them move and roll after each other. So too with Israel, if you hit one of them, they all feel it. (Song of Songs Rabbah 6:26)

1. What does this text say about Jewish unity?

Carob

תלמוד בבלי מסכת תענית דף כג/א
אמר רבי יוחנן כל ימיו של אותו צדיק היה מצטער על מקרא זה שיר המעלות בשוב ה' את שיבת ציון
היינו כחולמים אמר מי איכא דניים שבעין שנין בחלמא יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא חזייה להווא גברא
דהוה נטע חרובא אמר ליה האי עד כמה שנין טעין אמר ליה עד שבעין שנין אמר ליה פשיטא לך דחיית
שבעין שנין אמר ליה האי [גברא] עלמא בחרובא אשכחתייה כי היכי דשתלי לי אבהתי שתלי נמי לבראי

Rabbi Yochanan said, his entire life Choni the Circle drawer was troubled by the following verse: "A song of Ascents, when God restores the fortunes of Zion we will be like dreamers" (Psalms 126:1). He said, "Is there anyone who sleeps for 70 years in a dream?" One day he was traveling on the road and saw a man planting a carob tree. Choni said to the man, "How long does the tree require to grow [and produce fruit]?" The man answered, "70 years." Choni said, "do you think you will live for 70 years?!" The man replied, "I found the world with carob trees; just as my fathers planted for me, I too am planting for my children." (Babylonian Talmud, Ta'anit 23a)

1. How does the man's planting a carob tree answer Choni's question about the verse from Psalms?
2. How does this story relate to your notions of social responsibility?
3. What kind of legacy do you want to leave for the next generation?

Fruit Dreams

Babylonian Talmud, Brachot 57a

אמר רבי חייא בר אבא, הוואה חטים בחלום, ראה שלום, שגאמר, (תהלים קמז) "השם גבולך שלום, חלב חטים ושבועך". הוואה שעורים בחלום, סרו עונותיו, שגאמר, (ישעיה ו) "וסר עונך וחסאתך תכפר". אמר רבי זירא, אנא, לא סלקי מבבל לארץ ישראל, עד דחזאי שערי בחלמא. הוואה גפן טעונה בחלום, אין אשתו מפלת נפלים, שגאמר, (תהלים קכח) "אשתך כגפן פריה". שורקה, יצפה למשיח, שגאמר, (בראשית מט) "אסרי לגפן עירה ולשרקה בני אתנו". הוואה תאנה בחלום, תורתו משתמרת בקרבו, שגאמר, (משלי כז) "ניצר תאנה יאכל פריה". הוואה רמונים בחלום, זוטרי - פרי עסקיה פרמוני. רברבי - רבי עסקיה פרמונא. פלגי, אם תלמיד חכם הוא יצפה לתורה, שגאמר, (שיר ח) "אשקך מיין הרקח, מעסיס רמני". ואם עם הארץ הוא, יצפה למצוה, שגאמר, (שם ד) "כפלח הרמון רקתך". מאי "רקתך"? אפלו ריקנין שגך מלאים מצות פרמון. הוואה זיתים בחלום, זוטרי - פרי ורבי, וקאי עסקיה כזיתים. והני מילי פרי, אבל אילני, הון ליה בנינים מרבים, שגאמר, (תהלים קכח) "בניך כשתלי זיתים" וגו'. איכא דאמרי, הוואה זית בחלום, שם טוב יוצא לו, שגאמר, (ירמיה יא) "זית רענן, יפה פרי תאר קרא ה' שמך". הוואה שמן זית בחלום, יצפה למאור תורה, שגאמר, (שמות כז) "ויקחו אליך שמן זית זך". הוואה תמרים בחלום, תמו עונותיו, שגאמר, (איכה ד) "תם עונך בת ציון" ... הוואה הדס בחלום, נכסיו מצליחין לו, ואם אין לו נכסים, ירשה נופלת לו ממקום אחר. אמר עולא, ואמרי לה במתניתא תנא, והוא דחזא בכניהו. הוואה אתרוג בחלום, הדור הוא לפני קונו, שגאמר, (ויקרא כג) "פרי עץ הדר כפת תמרים". הוואה לולב בחלום, אין לו אלא לב אחד לאביו שבשמים.

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba says, one who sees wheat in one's dream – has seen peace, as it says "He endows your realm with well-being, and satisfies you with choice wheat" (Psalms 147:14).

Appendix B – Identifying with Fruit

One who sees barley in one's dream – his sins depart from him, as it says, "your guilt shall depart and your sin be purged away" (Isaiah 6:7). Rabbi Zeirah says "I did not leave from Babylon to the Land of Israel until I saw barley in my dreams."

One who sees a grape vine in one's dream. If it is *abundant* – his wife will not miscarry, as it says, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house" (Psalms 128:3). If it is a choice vine, he should await the Messiah, as it says, "He tethers his ass to a vine, his ass's foal to a choice vine" (Genesis 49:11).

One who sees a fig in one's dream – the Torah he has learned will be preserved within him, as it says, "He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit" (Proverbs 27:18).

If one sees pomegranates in one's dream. If they are a few, his business shall be fruitful like pomegranates. If they are many, his business shall be plentiful like pomegranates. If they are spilt in half: If he is a sage, he should anticipate Torah, and if he is an ignoramus he should anticipate *mitzvot*, as it says "Your brow behind our veil gleams like a pomegranate split open" (Song of Songs 6:7). What does the word "brow" ("*rakateich*" in Hebrew) mean? Even the "empty ones" (*reikanim*) among you are full of *mitzvot* like a pomegranate.

If one sees olives in one's dreams – *his business will be fruitful and plentiful like olives*. This is true only if he sees fruit, but if he sees an olive tree, he will have many children, as it says, "Your sons like olive saplings around your table" (Psalms 128:3). Some say that if one sees olives in one's dreams, he will have a good *name/reputation*, as it says, "The Lord names you 'Verdant olive tree,'" (Jeremiah 11:16). If one sees olive oil in one's dream, one should await the light of Torah, as it says, "they shall bring you clear oil of beaten olives" (Exodus 27:20).

If one sees dates in one's dreams – his sins have expired, as it says, "Your iniquity, Fair Zion, is expiated (***TaM the first two letters for the Hebrew word TaMaR–date***)" (Lamentations 4:22)...

If one sees myrtle in one's dream, his business dealings will be successful. If he doesn't have business dealings, he will receive inheritance from a different source. Some say Ula says the following while others some say it comes from a Mishnah, that this is true only if he sees it in bunches.

If one sees a citron fruit (an *etrog*) in one's dream, he is beautiful to his Creator, as it says "the fruit of a beautiful tree ..." (Leviticus 23:40).

If one sees one date palm, a *lulav*, in one's dream, he has one heart for his Father in heaven.

Appendix C Dream Mapping Sources

The world of *yetzira* deals with the value of planting trees. The Talmud tells a well known story of Choni the Circle Drawer, which links planting with dreams.

BABYLONIAN TALMUD TA'ANIT 23A

אמר רבי יוחנן: כל ימיו של אותו צדיק היה מצטער על מקרא זה (תהלים קכ"ו) שיר המעלות בשוב ה' את שיבת ציון היינו כחולמים. אמר: מי איכא דניים שבעין שנין בחלמא? יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא, חזייה לההוא גברא דהוה נטע חרובא, אמר ליה: האי, עד כמה שנין טעין? אמר ליה: עד שבעין שנין. אמר ליה: פשיטא לך דחיית שבעין שנין? אמר ליה: האי [גברא] עלמא בחרובא אשכחתיה, כי היכי דשתלי לי אבהתי שתלי נמי לבראי. יתיב, קא כריך ריפתא, אתא ליה שינתא, ניס. אהדרא ליה משוניתא, איכסי מעינא, וניס שבעין שנין. כי קם חזייה לההוא גברא דהוה קא מלקט מינייהו. אמר ליה: את הוא דשתלתיה? אמר ליה: בר בריה אנא. אמר ליה: שמע מינה דניימי שבעין שנין. חזא לחמריה דאתיילידא ליה רמכי רמכי. אזל לביתיה, אמר להו: בריה דחוני המעגל מי קיים? אמרו ליה: בריה ליתא, בר בריה איתא. אמר להו: אנא חוני המעגל. לא הימנוהו. אזל לבית המדרש, שמעינהו לרבנן דקאמרי: נהירן שמעתתין כבשני חוני המעגל, דכי הוי עייל לבית מדרשא, כל קושיא דהוה להו לרבנן הוה מפרק להו. אמר להו: אנא ניהו, ולא הימנוהו, ולא עבדי ליה יקרא כדמבעי ליה, חלש דעתיה, בעי רחמי ומית. אמר רבא, היינו דאמרי אינשי: או חברותא או מיתותא.

R. Johanan said: This righteous man [Choni the Circle Drawer] was troubled throughout the whole of his life about the meaning of the verse from Psalms (which we sing before the Grace after Meals on Sabbaths and festivals), "A Song of the Steps, When the Lord brought back those that returned to Zion, we were like dreamers."

He wondered: Is it possible for one man to live long enough to dream continuously for seventy years? [As it is written, "For the Lord said: When Babylon's seventy years are over, I will take note of you, and I will fulfill you to my promise of favor-to bring you back to this place." (Jeremiah 29:10)]

One day he was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree; he asked him, "How long does it take [for this tree] to bear fruit?" The man replied: "Seventy years." He then further asked him: "Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?" The man replied: "I found [ready grown] carob trees in the world; as my forefathers planted these for me so I too plant these for my children."

Choni sat down to have a meal and sleep overcame him. As he slept a rocky formation enclosed upon which hid him from sight, and he continued to sleep for seventy years. When he awoke he saw a man gathering the fruit of the carob tree and he asked him, "Are you the man who planted the tree?" The man replied: "I am his grandson." He then exclaimed: "It is clear that I have slept for seventy years." He then caught sight of his ass who had since given birth to several generations; and he returned

home. He asked, "Is the son of Choni the circle drawer still alive?" The people answered him, "His son is no more, but his grandson is still living." He said to them: "I am Choni the circle drawer," but no one would believe him. He then walked to the House of Study and there he overheard the scholars say, "The law is as clear to us as in the days of Choni the circle drawer, for whenever he came to the House of Study, he would settle for the scholars any difficulty that they had." Whereupon he called out, "I am he!" but the scholars would not believe him nor did they give him the honor due to him. This hurt him greatly and he prayed [for death] and he died. Raba said: That is why the folks say, Either you have companionship or you may as well be dead.

Your Choni Navigator

1. How does the man planting a carob tree answer Choni's question about the verse from Psalms?
2. Why does Choni seek out his own children in the next generation?
3. Why do the scholars not believe Choni?
4. What does this story teach about the legacy that one leaves for the next generation?
5. What legacy do you want to leave for future generations?

Having studied the story of Choni and dreams, let us look at a source that relates dreams to fruit. As an activity, first study the text below and then do an art project depicting your dreams.

If your seder is being conducted on Shabbat, instead of an art project have a discussion about dreams.

Babylonian Talmud, Brachot 57a

אמר רבי חניא בר אבא, הרוואה חטים בתלום, ראה שלום, שגאמר, (תהלים קמז) "השם גבולך שלום, חלב חטים ישביעך". הרוואה שעורים בתלום, סרו עונותיו, שגאמר, (ישעיה ו) "נסר עונך וחסאתך תכפר". אמר רבי זירא, אגא, לא סלקי מבבל לארץ ישראל, עד דחזאי שערין בחלמא. הרוואה גפן טעונה בתלום, אין אשתו מפלת נפלים, שגאמר, (תהלים קכח) "אשתך כגפן פריה". שורקה, יצפה למשיח, שגאמר, (בראשית מט) "א' סרי לגפן עיר ה' ולש' רקה בני את'נו". הרוואה תאנה בתלום, תורתו משתמרת בקרבן, שגאמר, (משלי כז) "נ' צר תאנה י' אכל פריה". הרוואה רמונים בתלום, זוטרי - פרי עסקיה כרמוני. רברבי - רבי עסקיה כרמוני. אגא, פלגי, אם תלמיד חכם הוא יצפה לתורה, שגאמר, (שיר ח) "אשקך מיני הרקת, מעסיס רמ'ני". ואם עם הארץ הוא, יצפה למצוה, שגאמר, (שם ד) "כפלת הרמון רקתך". מאי "רקתך"? אפלו ריקנין שברך מלאים מצות כרמון. הרוואה זיתים בתלום, זוטרי - פרי ורבי, וקאי עסקיה כזיתים. ונהני מילי פרי, אכל אילני, הנין ליה בניי מרבים, שגאמר, (תהלים קכח) "בניך פשתלי זיתים" וגו'. איכא דאמרי, הרוואה זית בתלום, שם טוב יוצא לו, שגאמר, (ירמיה יא) תורה, שגאמר, (שמות כז) "ניקחו זית רענן, יפה פרי ת' אר קרא ה' שמך". הרוואה שמן זית בתלום, יצפה למאור אלקיך שמן זית זך". הרוואה תמרים בתלום, תמו עונותיו, שגאמר, (איכה ד) "תם עונך בת ציון" ... הרוואה הדס בתלום, נכסיו מצליחין לו, ואם אין לו נכסים, ירשה נופלת לו ממקום אחר. אמר עילא, ואמרי לה במתניתא תנא, והוא דחזא בכניהו. הרוואה

Appendix C – Dream Mapping Sources

אֶתְרוֹג בְּחֵלוֹם, הַדּוֹר הוּא לְפָנָי קוֹנוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, (וַיִּקְרָא כַג) "פְּרִי עֵץ הַדָּר כַּפֹּת תִּמְרִים". הַרְוָאָה לִדְלֵב בְּחֵלוֹם, אֵין לוֹ אֶלְא לֵב אֶחָד לְאַבְיוֹ שֶׁבְּשָׂמַיִם.

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba says, one who sees wheat in one's dream – has seen peace, as it says "He endows your realm with well-being, and satisfies you with choice wheat" (Psalms 147:14).

One who sees barley in one's dream – his sins depart from him, as it says, "your guilt shall depart and your sin be purged away" (Isaiah 6:7). Rabbi Zeirah says "I did not leave from Babylon to the Land of Israel until I saw barley in my dreams."

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One who sees a fig in one's dream – the Torah he has learned will be preserved within him, as it says, "He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit" (Proverbs 27:18).

If one sees pomegranates in one's dream. If they are a few, his business shall be fruitful like pomegranates. If they are many, his business shall be plentiful like pomegranates. If they are spilt in half: If he is a sage, he should anticipate Torah, and if he is an ignoramus he should anticipate *mitzvot*, as it says "Your brow behind our veil gleams like a pomegranate split open" (Song of Songs 6:7). What does the word "brow" ("*rakateich*" in Hebrew) mean? Even the "empty ones" (*reikanim*) among you are full of *mitzvot* like a pomegranate.

If one sees olives in one's dreams – *his business will be fruitful and plentiful like olives*. This is true only if he sees fruit, but if he sees an olive tree, he will have many children, as it says, "Your sons like olive saplings around your table" (Psalms 128:3). Some say that if one sees olives in one's dreams, he will have a good *name/reputation*, as it says, "The Lord names you 'Verdant olive tree,'" (Jeremiah 11:16). If one sees olive oil in one's dream, one should await the light of Torah, as it says, "they shall bring you clear oil of beaten olives" (Exodus 27:20).

If one sees dates in one's dreams – his sins have expired, as it says, "Your iniquity, Fair Zion, is expiated (***TaM the first two letters for the Hebrew word TaMaR–date***)" (Lamentations 4:22)...

If one sees myrtle in one's dream, his business dealings will be successful. If he doesn't have business dealings, he will receive inheritance from a different source. Some say Ula says the following while others some say it comes from a Mishnah, that this is true only if he sees it in bunches.

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If one sees one date palm, a *lulav*, in one's dream, he has one heart for his Father in heaven.

Appendix D

Trees, Life & War

Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki

The word “for” here indicates a question. [That is to say]: “are trees of the field human beings able to come against you in a siege?” To be tormented with hunger and thirst like the people of the city. Why should you destroy them?

Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra

This is its meaning: Because you eat from [trees], you shall not cut them down. For a human being is the tree of the field – This means the life of humans is the tree of a field... You shall not destroy a fruit tree which brings life to humans, you are only allowed to eat from it and it is forbidden for you to destroy it in order to besiege a city.

Nachmanides

Rabbi Abraham (Ibn Ezra) understood this verse beautifully, [when he understood this verse as a statement and not a question]...for the meaning of “for a human being is a tree of the field” is a way of emphasizing humanity’s dependence on trees, just as it is written, “A hand mill or an upper millstone may not be taken in pawn, for that would be taking someone’s life in pawn.”

(Deuteronomy 24:6)

Our sages in the Talmud understood this verse

differently, they maintained that it is allowed to cut a fruit tree to build a siege, and the Torah says “Only trees that you **know** do not yield food may be destroyed... “to teach that one should cut barren trees before fruit trees.” Their understanding of this section is that the Torah warned against cutting trees for the sake of destruction and not out of necessity for the siege, as other armies do... You should not do this for you trust in God that He will give your enemies to you “for man is the tree of the field” from it you shall eat and live, and with it the city will fall to you in siege. That is to say, you will live from it after you capture the city...

When you besiege a town for many days, waging war against it, to seize it: you are not to bring-ruin on its trees, by swinging-away (with) an ax against them, for from them you eat, them you are not to cut down—for are the trees of the field human beings, (able) to come against you in a siege? Deut. 20:19

Haketav ve-haKabbalah Rabbi Jacob Zevi Meklenburg, 18th Century

Even if the intention in cutting the tree is not to be destructive, but for constructive purposes such as building a ladder or capturing a city, it is still forbidden to cut the tree. **The reason for this prohibition is that it is not proper to use any of God’s creations for the opposite of that which it was intended.** A fruit tree, which is intended to feed and sustain people, should not be used in a siege, which is intended to defeat one’s enemies by starving them... It seems more fitting to me to translate the word “ki” as “like.” So the meaning of the verse is “Just like man, so is the tree of the field” concerning the enemy coming in siege. Just as you are forbidden to destroy people who are besieged if they offer you peace and agree to pay a tax to you, so too are you warned against

destroying fruit trees, for you have benefit in eating its fruits... Trees are just like besieged people. Just as you are forbidden to destroy people because of the benefit of the tax, so too you shall not destroy fruit trees because you have benefit in enjoying their fruit.

Midrash Sifre Devarim

From the simple reading of the verse, I would only think that it is forbidden to cut down trees using an ax. How do we know that it is even forbidden to destroy trees by drawing

water away from them? Because it says “not to bring-ruin on its trees” – by any means.

Maimonides, The Laws of Kings and their Wars

It is forbidden to chop down fruit trees and to deny them water so they will dry, as it says in the Torah “do not destroy its trees.” This applies not only during a siege, but in all instances that one chops down a fruit tree in a destructive manner... This is true not only of trees, but whoever breaks vessels or rips clothing or destroys a building, or blocks up a water source, or destroys foodstuffs, in a destructive manner has violated the prohibition of bal tashchit –do not be wasteful...



Jerusalem Talmud, Kiddushin 48b

Rabbi Hezekiah said in the name of Rav: A person will have to give judgment for everything that he laid eyes upon and did not eat.



Appendix E

NAVIGATING TREES, LIFE & WAR

There are different opinions offered on a verse that at a glance is very straightforward. In your reading of the verse, would you assume that its context is only in times of war? Would you expand it to all contexts? Would you make exceptions, or would you see it as an unequivocal and absolute statement?

Navigating Rashi

1. How is Rashi's challenge relevant?
2. Is it possible for the "innocent" to remain unscathed in times of war?
3. Would Rashi's position change if there were a demonstrated need to destroy the trees?

Navigating Avraham Ibn Ezra

1. According to Ibn Ezra why are we not allowed to destroy fruit trees?
2. What difference does it make that the tree "brings life to humans" while in the process of destroying humans?
3. Could this limitation undermine a military objective?
4. If the answer is yes, why are trees so important according to Avraham Ibn Ezra?

Navigating Midrash Sifre Devarim

1. What fine point does the Midrash learn?
2. Why is this important?

Navigating Maimonides

1. How does Maimonides expand this statement beyond the issues of war?
2. What does Maimonides have in common with each of the previous commentaries? How is he different?
3. Would Maimonides ever allow the destruction of fruit trees? Prove your point by bringing a proof text.