

TU B'SHEVAT FAMILY SEDER

What is Tu B'Shevat?

Once a woman was traveling in a hot desert. She was hungry, tired, and thirsty, and she came upon a tree. She ate from the tree's sweet fruits, rested in the tree's magnificent shade, and drank water from a stream near the tree's roots. When she got up to continue her journey, she said, "Tree, how shall I bless you? Shall I say, 'May your fruit be sweet'? It is sweet already! Shall I say, 'May your shade be pleasant'? It is already so pleasant! Shall I say, 'May a stream of water flow by your roots'? There is already a stream! Therefore, I say, 'May all the trees that come from you be as wonderful as you are!'"

➤ Join in Yoga – How We are Rooted to the Ground

The Tu B'Shevat seder is split into four sections, each reflecting the seasons and symbolizing different aspects of the trees and our own lives.

1. WINTER



➤ Pour a glass of white grape juice. Say the blessing and drink half or more.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Let us bless the Source of Life that ripens fruit on the vines, as we weave the branches of our lives into the tradition of the Jewish people.

➤ We start our seder with winter when many species in nature lay dormant and hidden. Just like animals hibernating, the fruits and nuts of this seder portion are hidden in their shells.

Here is our blessing for fruits that grow on a tree, called in Hebrew an עֵץ (etz):

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-Olam, borei p'ri ha-etz

Blessed are You, Divine Presence, Who creates the fruit of the tree.

And for reaching this season, we add Shehecheyanu.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שְׁהַחַיְנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לַזְמַן הַזֶּה.

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, shehecheyanu, v'kiy'manu, v'higiyanu laz'man hazeh.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

- **Let's taste foods, like nuts, coconuts or pomegranate, with hard outsides and edible insides.**

Because of their hard exterior, these foods can represent the human tendency to judge others by their outer appearance. Eating these fruits reminds us that whoever we are, we all have unique gifts within us.

- **Discuss:** When have you “judged a book by its cover” only to realize that you were mistaken?
- **Discuss:** What barriers stop me from being the best in any particular goal or achievement?



- **Add a drop of red grape juice and fill the rest with white. Say the blessing and drink half or more.**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Let us bless the Source of Life that ripens fruit on the vines, as we weave the branches of our lives into the tradition of the Jewish people.

After you added a few drops of the red grape juice to the white, look at the way a little bit of color can cause a lot of change. This color change lets us know that, even in the coldest days, the spring will come, and with it – the rebirth of earth.

Here is our blessing for fruits that grow on a tree, called in Hebrew an עֵץ (etz):

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-Olam, borei p'ri ha-etz

Blessed are You, Divine Presence, Who creates the fruit of the tree.

- **Let's taste fruits with a pit, such as olives, dates, cherries.**

Although we throw away the pits, they are seeds which mean rebirth. Every flowering tree was once small and bare. They can symbolize the potential that is still within us – that we have not yet tapped.

- **Discuss:** What is something you have done or created that started out very small and became bigger or more important over time.
- **Discuss:** What potential do you think you have hidden?

- **Watch** “Get Out and Plant a Tree”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLN2JaiGxdE>

3. SUMMER



- Refill the glass with equal mix of red and white grape juice. Say the blessing and drink half or more.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Let us bless the Source of Life that ripens fruit on the vines, as we weave the branches of our lives into the tradition of the Jewish people.

This is the cup of diversity. With this cup, we celebrate the many kinds of living things with which we share this earth.

Here is our blessing for fruits that grow on a tree, called in Hebrew an עֵץ (etz):

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-Olam, borei p'ri ha-etz

Blessed are You, Divine Presence, Who creates the fruit of the tree.

- Let's taste fruits that can be eaten whole, such as grapes, apples, blueberries, raisins.

These fruits remind us of the wholeness of the world, where nothing is wasted, and everything nourishes everything else.

- **Discuss:** When do you feel truly whole and happy?
- **Discuss:** Judaism teaches us to draw hope from our collective ability to shape a better world through everyday actions. How can we partner with God to complete the work of creation.
- **Read the story of Honi and see the importance of small deeds.**

The Story of Honi

A long time ago, Honi, the Circle-Drawer, walked in the land of Israel, when he met a man planting a carob tree with his grandchild.

"Old man," chided Honi, "don't you know you'll never live to eat the fruits of this tree?"

"I know that, but my grandchild will. As my grandfather planted for me, so I shall plant for her".

But Honi was not satisfied with this reply, even as he rested on the earth. He slept and slept for many years, and when he awoke he had a long white beard. He was amazed. He saw an old woman picking fruit from a tree nearby to give to a young child with her

"Is that your fruit tree?" he asked.

"It is mine because my grandfather planted it for me. I tend it so that my grandson can have it also. We have already taken from this tree seeds to plant another one."

It was then Honi remembered what the old man had said to him long ago. He understood that God was giving him a lesson in planting not only for oneself but for generations to come.



- Pour a glass of red grape juice. Say the blessing and drink all of it.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Let us bless the Source of Life that ripens fruit on the vines, as we weave the branches of our lives into the tradition of the Jewish people.

At our final step we will focus on the sense of smell rather than taste. We think about what is invisible to the eye or things that are part of us and part of the world that we can't see or hear.

- Let's enjoy sweet smells of things like cinnamon, rosemary, or cedar.

Like the roots of trees, these smells are hidden. We don't see the seeds help a tree grow or hear the sun come up. But these bring us new days and help the cycle of life.

- **Discuss:** What helps you appreciate what you cannot see?
- **Discuss:** How can we use our strength for good and not for destruction?

Seder Closing

- **Together we recite these four blessings for each of us on Tu B'Shevat:**

1. Trees give us air to breathe, helping to sustain life. So, too, may you have a long, happy, healthy life. May you have space to breathe and may you breathe life into others by your example.
2. Trees have roots that go deep into the ground and connect not only with the earth but with other trees. So, too, may you always know the joy of family, close friends, and a community to keep you company throughout your life. May you always be surrounded by people who love you and keep you connected.
3. Tree trunks hold steady through harsh conditions. So, too, may you be held steady through life's inevitable bumps.

4. The leaves of trees know when to hold on and when to let go. Called by the voice of nature itself, they follow a rhythm of their own. So, too, may you hear the still, small voice within you, and may it inspire you to a life of goodness in harmony with the world around you. *by Naomi Gurt Lind from Ritualwell.org

➤ **Let us sing together, *Eitz chaim hi*/It is a tree of life:**

*Eitz cha-a-yim hi, la ma-cha-zi-kim-bah,
V'-to-m'-che-ha m'-u-shar
D'-ra-che-ha, dar-chei no-am
V'-chol n'-ti-vo-te-cha, sha-lom*

*Ha-shi-vei-nu A-do-nai
Ei-le-cha v'-na-shu-vah
Cha-deish, cha-deish ya-mei-nu
Cha-deish ya-mei-nu, k'-ke-dem*

עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא לְמַחְזִיקִים בָּהּ,
וְתַמְכִּיהָ מְאֹשֶׁר.
דְּרָכֶיהָ דְּרָכֵי נְעָם,
וְכָל נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם.
הַשִּׁיבֵנו יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנָשׁוּבָה,
חֲדָשׁ יָמֵנו כְּקֶדֶם.

It is a tree of life for those who hold fast to it, and all its supporters are happy. Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.

Return us to You, Adonai, and we will return; renew our days as of old.

Havdalah Blessings

Blessing over the wine: Baruch Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha'olam, borei p'ri hagafen.

Blessing over the spices: Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech Haolam, boreh minay visamim.

Blessing over the Havdalah Candle: Baruch Atah Adonai, Elohaynu Melech Haolam, boreh mi'oray ha'esh.

Blessing of Havdalah: Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, hamavdil bein kodesh l'hol, bein or l'hoshech, bein yom hashvi'I l'sheishet yamei hama'aseh. Baruch ata Adonai, hamavdil bein kodesh l'hol.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, Creator of all kinds of spices.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, Creator of the lights of fire.

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who distinguishes between sacred and ordinary, between light and darkness, between the seventh day and the six days of creation.

Blessed are You, Adonai, Who distinguishes between sacred and ordinary.

Sip the wine or grape juice. Extinguish the Havdalah candle in the remaining wine/juice while the following is sung or read.

Ha-mav-dil bein ko-desh l'chol, cha-to-tei-nu ka-chol v'cha-ko-cha-vim ba-lai-la.

You teach us to distinguish between the commonplace and the holy: teach us also to transform our sins to merits. Let those who love You be numerous as the sands, and the stars of heaven.