



הגדה של ט"ו בשבט

Tu Bishvat Haggadah



Introduction to Tu Bishvat

Rabbi Elan Mazer
National Director, Mizrachi Canada

Growing up in Canada I was always told that Tu Bishvat marks the end of winter and the beginning of the growing season. While it is clear that in Canada this is not remotely true, since the holiday usually falls out around the middle of February, I assumed that in Israel, Tu Bishvat would indeed be the start of spring. Once I made Aliyah, however, I was disappointed to realize that this was not the case there either. February in Israel is cold and rainy; spring only begins sometime in March. What, then, do we celebrate on Tu Bishvat?

The Gemara in Massechet Rosh Hashana (14b) answers that Tu Bishvat is the date when "Most of the rain has fallen, but much of the season is still yet to come." In other words Tu Bishvat is the date that marks when the halfway point of the rainy season has passed. Nothing actually happens on that day, though. The season does not change, the flowers are not blossoming, and the fruits have not yet started to grow.

In the creation story at the beginning of Bereishit, there is a clear pattern: whatever G-d says should be created, is created. He said, "let there be light," and then there was light. Throughout creation though, there were a few deviations from G-d's command. On the third day, G-d said that the earth should sprout forth "**fruit trees** that make fruit", but in the next verse the Torah says that from the earth sprouted "**trees** that make fruit". Our sages noticed that there was slight deviation, while G-d commanded there to be **fruit trees** making fruit, just **trees** sprout forth. They explain that the difference between fruit trees and regular trees is that the trees were meant to taste like the fruit they produced, however in reality this was not achieved, and while fruit today is enjoyable and tasty, the trees are not.

While this seems like a very strange story, Rav Kook explains

that this event is actually a profound description of the reality in which we live. Fruit represents the end goal in all our endeavors, the paycheck at the end of the month, the championship at the end of a season, or the diploma at the end of a degree. Accomplishments "taste" so good. The tree is the process towards those ends; it is the effort and hard work necessary to reach our goals. Often this "bitter taste"

of hard work seems daunting, and it only seems to have been worth it once we are able to reap the fruits of our labor. Ideally, during the process itself, we would be able to recognize the value of the hard work that we are putting in. Usually, though, only the fruits are seen as important.

Summer brings happiness. Everyone rejoices when they see the trees blossoming and the fruits turning ripe. It is easy to see the value in the harvest, the graduation, the raising of the championship trophy. It is much harder to enjoy the wet and cold of the winter,

even though they are necessary components of producing fruit. Tu Bishvat is the celebration of the process, of the effort and grit and hard work. When no flowers can be seen and no fruits can be picked, we celebrate spring. We realize that the process is just as important as the accomplishments.

The Canadian Jewish community has an incredible history of bringing in and supporting shlichim. Every Israeli that spends time in our community sees the deep connection between the community and the State of Israel. However, we, the shlichim, realize that the community only achieved this through hard work dedication and a true love for our Torah and Israel. This Haggadah is our tribute and thank you to the community for planting the trees so that we all can reap the fruit.

Chag Sameach!

When no flowers can be seen and no fruits can be picked, we celebrate spring. We realize that the process is just as important as the accomplishments.

Why the 15th of Shevat?

Rabbi Seth Grauer

Rosh Yeshiva/Head of School, Bnei Akiva Schools

The Gemara asks: Why is Rosh Hashanah L'ilanot in the month of Shevat?

"Even though much of the winter is ahead of us, and the blossoming of the tree is still in the distance, it is the best time to begin the new season, because the majority of the rain needed by the trees has already fallen and the trees are therefore already preparing for the Spring."

It is very interesting that we celebrate the holiday of Tu Bishvat on the 15th of the month – the same day that Pesach and Sukkot also fall.

The fact that Pesach and Sukkot fall out on the same day is considered very important by the Gemara as there are many drashot and laws that are shared by Pesach and Sukkot as a result of this shared date.

The 15th of the month is also a very symbolic day, because on the 15th we can see a full-moon. The 15th is the brightest night of the month and creates clarity and sight in an otherwise very dark environment.

Every year we look back on the events that we commemorate on Pesach and Sukkot, and appreciate the providence and guiding hand with which G-d led us. Perhaps the 15th of the month was chosen for these holidays, because the 15th represents that clarity and sight in dark times.

Tu Bishvat is no different. Tu Bishvat is celebrated in the dead of the winter. Tu Bishvat often falls on the coldest days of the year when no one in their right mind is thinking about the Spring season, trees, flowers and warm weather.

On Tu Bishvat we plant trees knowing only our grandchildren will benefit from those trees, but we plant those trees nonetheless.

Perhaps Tu Bishvat is celebrated in the middle of the winter, to remind us that we believe there is always hope. There is always a light at the end of the tunnel. Spring is always right around the corner.

It is interesting to note that the early Zionists in Israel, many of whom were very secular, celebrated and considered Tu Bishvat to be one of the most significant and holy holidays in the Jewish calendar, because it represented hope for the future.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes in *The Dignity of Difference* (p. 206):

One of the most important distinctions I have learned in the course of reflection on Jewish history is the difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the belief that, together, we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope an active one. It takes no courage to be an optimist, but it takes a great deal of

courage to have hope. Knowing what we do of our past, no Jew can be an optimist. But Jews have never – despite a history of sometimes awesome suffering – given up hope.

Tu Bishvat is a chag of active hope in which we teach our children that we must never stop building the land of Israel. There may be times of darkness, cold and it might be hard to have vision, motivation, drive, passion and stay motivated in the dread of the winter, but as Rabbi Tarfon taught us (*Pirkei Avot* 2:16) "It is not your responsibility to finish the work, but you are not free to desist from it either."

On Tu Bishvat we plant trees knowing only our grandchildren will benefit from those trees, but we plant those trees nonetheless.

Introduction

הקדמה

In the 16th century, the Kabbalists of Tzfat put together a Tu Bishvat Seder, which involves enjoying the fruits that G-d has given us, particularly those native to the Land of Israel. This Seder gives us the opportunity to discuss philosophical concepts associated with the symbolism of the fruit. Among other things, the Seder is a great way to appreciate the abundance that we so often take for granted, and to develop a generous attitude towards the world around us.

The Land of Israel

For Jews around the world, Tu Bishvat is a day for thanking Hashem for the Land of Israel and its prosperity.

כִּי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ מְבִיאֲךָ אֶל אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה אֶרֶץ נַחֲלֵי מַיִם עֵינֹת וְתַהֲמוֹת
יְצָאִים בְּבִקְעָה וּבְהָרִים: אֶרֶץ חֹטֶה וְשֹׁעֵרָה וְגִפְנִין וְתַאֲנָה וְרִמּוֹן אֶרֶץ
זֵית שֶׁמֶן וְדֹבֶשׁ: אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לֹא בְּמִסְכָּנֶת תֹּאכַל בָּהּ לֶחֶם לֹא תִחָסֵר
כֹּל בָּהּ אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲבִנֶיהָ בְּרֹזֶל וּמַהֲרָהּ תַחְצֹב נְחֹשֶׁת: וְאֶכְלָתָהּ
וְשִׁבַּעְתָּ וּבִרְכַּתָּ אֶת יְיָ אֱלֹקֶיךָ עַל הָאֶרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ:
(דברים ח)

For the Lord your G-d is bringing you to a good land, a land with brooks of water, fountains and depths, that emerge in valleys and mountains: A land of wheat and barley, vines and figs and pomegranates, a land of oil producing olives and honey: A land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, you will lack nothing in it, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose mountains you will hew copper: And you will eat and be sated, and you shall bless the Lord, your G-d, for the good land He has given you. (Devarim 8)

"Because man is the tree of the field"

Rabbi Shalom and Tali David
Shlichim, Netivot HaTorah Day School

The Chazon Ish once said: Farmers do not judge a tree by its size or beauty, rather by the fruit it produces. If it produces sweet fruit, he will make sure to take care of that tree. However, a tree that produces rotten fruit, gets cut down and a new one is planted in its stead. Every day the farmer checks his trees and decides their fate. Should they be trimmed, painted or cut down... this world is Hashem's orchard, and we are the fruit trees.

Chazal said that we as a people and educators, should emulate Hashem's ways and cultivate the trees that He has put in our hands, our children and our students. It is our job to water them, protect them, take care of all their needs, plant them in a good environment, trim the thorns and hope and pray that they produce sweet fruit. We also must realize, that size and beauty doesn't really matter, rather comes out of them. So often society embraces the external values instead of internal ones. We must learn to focus on our inner selves, only then would be able to become a fair and righteous people that value truth and purity.

The Midrash tells the following story: When Rabbi Yehuda ben Bateira, Rabbi Mattia ben Charash, Rabbi Chananya ben Achi, Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Yonatan started leaving the Land of Israel, they got to the border and turned around to look at their country. They started to cry and tore their clothes and cried out: "and you shall dwell in this Land and you keep all the laws..." – this comes to show that living in Israel is equal to performing all the mitzvot! And then they went back from where they came.

May we all merit and be worthy to live in the Land of Israel, to plant trees that bear only sweetness and may we generate Ahavat Chinam, by focusing on the inner value of each other and ourselves.



Grains

חיטה ושעורה

Take a cake or cracker, raise it and say:

וַיֵּתֶן לָךְ הָאֱלֹקִים מִטֵּל הַשָּׁמַיִם וּמִשְׁמַנֵּי הָאָרֶץ וְרֵב דָּגָן וְתִירֵשׁ: (בראשית כ:כח)
And may the Lord give you of the dew of the heavens and [of] the fatness of the earth and an abundance of grain and wine. (Bereshit 20:28)

עתידה חטה שתתמר כדקל ועולה בראש הרים (כתובות קיא).
A stalk of wheat will one day rise high like a palm, and will reach up to the mountaintops. (Ketubot 111a)

ארץ חיטה ושעורה וגפן ותאנה ורימון ארץ זית שמן ודבש: כל הקרוב לארץ מוקדם לברכה—מי שיש לו יותר אהבה לארץ ויותר השתדלות בענין ישוב ארץ"ה הוא מוקדם לברכה והוא קרוב יותר אל השלימות. (עין איה, ברכות ב' עמ' 186 על מא.)
“A land of wheat, barley, grape, fig, and pomegranate; a land of oil-olives and date-honey:” whatever’s closer to the word ‘land’ is being blessed on first” –
Whoever has more love for the land and more endurance in trying to build and settle Eretz Israel, he will get blessed earlier, and he is closer to the wholeness of G-d. (Rav Kook, Ein Aya, pg. 186)

יהי רצון שאהבתנו לארץ תצמח ותתמר כחיטה, אמן!
May our love for the Land Of Israel keep growing, Amen!

Say the Beracha of Mezonot:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מִזוֹנוֹת

Of spies, wheat, and Gan Eden

Rabbi Yair Spitz

Shaliach and Menahel,

Yeshivat Or Chaim of Bnei Akiva Schools

Aaron Aaronson is probably best known for his role in founding and running the spy network 'Nili', which aided the British in their battle against Ottoman control of pre-Israel Palestine. A lesser known fact is that Aaronson was a world-famous agronomist and botanist who, in 1906 during a scientific expedition near Rosh Pinah, discovered "Triticum dicoccoides" (wild Emmer) believed to be "the mother of wheat", the ancestor of modern cultivated wheat. His discovery and research paved the way for worldwide access to 'hardy wheat', capable of growing in poor soil, resistant to disease and drought as well as being rich in iron and zinc.

Billions of people across the globe have easier, better nutritious food thanks to this original Israeli wheat. Chazal tell us that עץ הדעת, the tree of knowledge in Gan Eden, was **wheat** (Brachot 40a).

It is no coincidence that the foundational human source of nutrition was discovered in modern day Israel, proving once more that Gan Eden was, and has returned to be, **the** Gan Eden—the source of all Bracha to the entire world.

Grapes

ענבים



We will drink four cups of wine of different colours during the course of our Seder. The colours symbolically take us through the seasons and the colours of the year; from winter whites to a touch of spring red, from rosy summer to the full redness of autumn.

Pour the first glass of wine. This should be white wine, symbolizing winter. Say the following:

וְיָשָׁב יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֶטֶחַ אִישׁ תַּחַת גִּפְנוֹ וְתַחַת תְּאֵנָתוֹ מִדָּן
וְעַד בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע כָּל יְמֵי שְׁלֹמֹה: (מלכים א' ה:ה)

*And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree,
from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon. (Melachim I, 5:5)*

וַיֵּין וְשִׁמַּח לֵבָב אָנוּשׁ לְהַצְהִיל פָּנִים מִשְׁמֶן וְלֶחֶם לֵבָב אָנוּשׁ יִסְעֵד: (תהלים קד:טו)

*And wine, which cheers man's heart, to make the face shine from oil, and bread,
which sustains man's heart. (Tehillim 104:15)*

לֶךְ אֲכַל בְּשִׂמְחָה לֶחֶמְךָ וּשְׂתֵה בְּלֵב טוֹב יֵינְךָ כִּי כָּבֹד רָצָה הָאֱלֹקִים אֶת מַעֲשֶׂיךָ: (קהלת ט:ז)
*Go, eat your bread joyfully and drink your wine with a merry heart, for G-d has
already accepted your deeds. (Kohelet 9:7)*

יהי רצון שנשב תחת ענפי הגפן בשלום, אמן!

May we sit under our vines in peace, Amen!

Take the cup of white wine and say the following Beracha:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן

Drink the wine.

The kedusha of the grape

Rav Yair and Tanya Halevi

Shlichim, Bnei Akiva Schools

The grape is one of the most unique and powerful fruits. Within it lies the potential which can lead to great tum'a (impurity) or great kedusha (purity). Wine (as a derivative of the grape) can be used for foolishness or as a sacred glorification of G-d. It takes hard work to produce wine from a grape.

Rav Shlomo Carlebach used to say that if you'd ask the grape about it in the middle of the process, the grape would say "You have no idea what I'm going through, everybody's stepping on me. Once I was so beautiful—look what has happened to me now!". But I would tell that grape, "Wait, just wait... soon, soon..." So too, are we, human beings. We work hard to shape who we potentially can become. That process can be tough, but with drive and patience, we will get there, both on a national and individual level. Strength is to know how to utilize what we acquire for the good and positive.



Olive

זית-שמן

Take the olive in your hand, raise it and say:

אֶתֵּן בַּמִּדְבָּר אֶרֶץ שֹׁטָה וְהִדַּס וְעֵץ שָׁמֶן אֲשִׁים בְּעֶרְבָה בְּרוֹשׁ תִּדְהָר וּתְאֲשׁוּר יַחְדָּו: (ישעיהו מא:יט)
I will give in the desert cedars, acacia trees, myrtles, and pines; I will place in the wilderness boxtrees, firs, and cypresses together. (Yeshayahu 41:19)

וְבָאוּ וְרִנְנוּ בְּמִרוֹם צִיּוֹן וְנָהָרוּ אֶל טוֹב ה'; עַל דָּגָן וְעַל תִּירֵשׁ וְעַל יִצְהָר וְעַל בְּנֵי צֶאֱן וּבִקָּר
וְהָיְתָה נִפְשָׁם כְּגֹן רוּחַ וְלֹא יוֹסִיפוּ לְדַאֲבָה עוֹד: (ישעיהו לא:יא)
And they shall come and jubilate on the height of Zion, and they will stream to the goodness of the Lord, over corn, wine, and oil, and over sheep and cattle, and their soul shall be like a well-watered garden, and they shall have no further worry at all. (Yirmiyahu 31:11)

וְעָשִׂיתָ אוֹתוֹ שֶׁמֶן מִשַּׁחַת קֹדֶשׁ רַקֵּחַ מִרְקַחַת מַעֲשֵׂה רַקֵּחַ שֶׁמֶן מִשַּׁחַת קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה...
וְאֵת אַהֲרֹן וְאֵת בְּנָיו תִּמְשַׁח וְקִדַּשְׁתָּ אוֹתָם לַכֹּהֵן לִי: (שמות ל:כה,ל)
You shall make this into an oil of holy anointment, a perfumed compound according to the art of a perfumer; it shall be an oil of holy anointment... And with it you shall anoint Aharon and his sons and sanctify them to serve Me [as Kohanim]. (Shemot 30:25,30)

יהי רצון שיחזרו הכהנים לעבודתם בבית המקדש במהרה בימינו, אמן!

May our Kohanim return to their place in Beit Hamikdash in our times, Amen!

Before reciting the following Beracha, have in mind that this Beracha is being recited for all the other fruits you will eat at the celebration.

If you do not eat olives and will only be eating a different fruit, remember to recite the Beracha before eating that fruit:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

The Zayit

Rav Rami Sadan

Shaliach, Mizrahi Canada and
Bnei Akiva Schools

The prophet Yirmiyahu describes the *zayit*, the olive tree, as close to Hashem. What is the connection between olives and a Divine connection?

The oil that comes from olives, because of its unique properties, does not mix well with other liquids; it always rises to the top. So too is G-d: while He is involved in this world, He stays unique and exalted above all.

The roots of the olive tree are also unique: instead of pointing downwards, they reach out to the sides creating a wide radius around it. G-d's connection to the world through his Torah, aims to effect as wide a radius as possible and to influence all aspects of life.

Olive trees are known for their longevity, and can give fruit for hundreds and even thousands of years. People are often excited by the new and the innovative, however it is the timeless principles that give the most meaning in life.

The olive tree, with its longevity, radius, and ability to rise above, symbolizes for us the deep and everlasting connection we have with G-d.



Why is it that fruits are the sign of the redemption?

Rav Shalom and Effi Krell
Shlichim, TanenbaumCHAT Kimel Campus

"Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta were walking through the Arbel Valley and saw the first rays of dawn. Rabbi Hiyya said to Rabbi Shimon ben Halafta: Such is Israel's redemption. At first it comes slowly by slowly, and as it progresses its light increases" (Yerushalmi, Brachot 1:1)

Rabbi Hiyya, who was of the generation of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, reveals to us a secret regarding the redemption. It will not come suddenly, as a surprise, rather bit by bit, stage after stage. But, as it progresses it becomes greater and greater. Like the crack of dawn, to the ascent of the sun upon the earth – at first one sees only brightness on the horizon and only afterwards the first rays of the sun itself.

Similarly, with the redemption, one witnesses the light of redemption before witnessing the origin of the light itself. But how are we to identify that it is the light of Mashiach which is dawning? To this the prophet Yechezkel (Ch. 36) responds: "Now you, son of man, prophesy concerning the mountains of Israel, and say; O mountains of Israel, hearken to the word of Hashem... And

you, the mountains of Israel, will produce your branches, and you will bear your fruit for My people Israel because they are about to come".

The Talmud, in Masechet Sanhedrin (98a), explains that it is specifically concerning the fruits of Israel: "and Rabbi Abba said – there is no clearer sign than

When the Land of Israel will give its fruits plentifully, then the redemption is near, and there is no clearer sign than this.

this, as it says 'And you, the mountains of Israel, will produce your branches, and you will bear your fruit for My people Israel because they are about to come', and Rashi explains: 'when the Land of Israel will give its fruits plentifully – then the redemption is near and there is no clearer sign than this'. There is no clearer sign than the fruits of Eretz Yisrael.

Why, though, are they signs of the redemption?

"Because man is like a fruit tree" (Devarim 20:19). Man is paralleled to a tree. Just like trees become more abundant in The Land at the start of the redemption, so too, do the children of The Land return to it and multiply, in its following stages. As Yechezkel continues to say, "And I shall multiply men upon you, the whole house of Israel in its entirety, and the cities will be settled, and the ruins will be built up. And I shall multiply upon you man and beast, and they will be fruitful and multiply, and I shall settle you as in your early days, and I shall make you better than your beginnings, and you will know that I am Hashem. And I shall cause man to walk upon you, My people Israel, and they will inherit you, and you will be to them for an inheritance, and you will no longer continue to be bereaved of them".

For more than 69 years now, Eretz Yisrael has returned to producing its fruits bountifully with the next stage being the return of its children to it. We have the opportunity to be those whom Yechezkel saw in his prophetic vision.

Date תמר

Take the date in your hand, raise it and say:

וַיּוֹצֵאנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה וּבְמַכָּא גָדֹל וּבְאִתּוֹת וּבְמִפְתִּיּוֹת:
וַיַּבְאֵנוּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתֵּן לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֲרֶץ זָבֶת חֶלֶב וְדִבְשׁ: וַעֲתָה הִנֵּה
הִבְאֵתִי אֶת רֵאשִׁית פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה לִּי ה' וְהִנַּחְתּוּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ: וְשָׂמַחְתָּ בְּכָל הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ וּלְבֵיתְךָ
אֲתָה וְהַלְוִי וְהַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ: (דברים כו:ח-יא)

And the Lord brought us out from Egypt with a strong hand and with an out-
stretched arm, with great awe, and with signs and wonders. And He brought
us to this place, and He gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.
And now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the ground which you,
O Lord, have given to me." Then, you shall lay it before the Lord, your G-d,
and prostrate yourself before the Lord, your G-d. Then, you shall rejoice with
all the good that the Lord, your G-d, has granted you and your household
you, the Levite, and the stranger who is among you. (Devarim 26: 8-11)

צָדִיק כְּתָמָר וְפָרַח כְּאַרְזֵי בִלְבָנוֹן יִשְׁגָּה: שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית ה' בְּחִצְרוֹת אֱלֹקֵינוּ
יִפְרִיחוּ: (תהלים צב:יג-יד)

The righteous one flourishes like the palm; as a cedar in Lebanon he grows.
Planted in the house of the Lord, in the courts of our G-d they will flourish.
(Tehillim 92:13-14)

יהי רצון שנפרח כתמר שתול בבית ה', אמן!

May we blossom like a date planted in the house of Hashem, Amen!

Cut the date open, check for bugs and enjoy eating the date!

Pour the second glass of wine. The second glass should be
three quarters white and one quarter red, symbolizing spring.
Raise the glass and say:

הריני מוכן ומזומן לשתות כוס שניה של ט"ו בשבט

Hareini Muchan Umezuman lishtot kos shniya shel Tu Bishvat
I am ready and willing to drink the second glass of the Tu Bishvat seder

"The tzaddik shall bloom as the date palm"

Noa Friedman Reinisberg

Educational Shlichah,

Jewish National Fund of Canada

Known in Hebrew as a "Tamar", the date palm tree is the only one to be part of both "The Four Species" we use on Sukkot (the lulav) and one of "The Seven Species" that Israel is blessed with.

Dates symbolize the Kabbalistic idea of *Tikun Olam*, fixing the world. Thanks to the efforts of JNF's Research & Development professionals, high-tech cutting edge innovative agricultural methods have been developed to increase harvest yields while preserving the delicate Negev environment.

Israeli farmers ensure that no part of the fruit or tree is ever wasted. More than that, date farming even has a tangible Tikun Olam-related purpose. For example, a sub-group of JNF's R&D team actively works on-site with the Turkana people of Kenya to educate them about modern agricultural practices and how to support themselves with agriculture.

High-tech methods that were first developed by JNF in Israel's Arava region are brought to Kenya (and other developing countries) in the form of education and infrastructure. This enables the Turkana people of Africa to grow dates in their own harsh semi-arid climate that resembles the Israeli Negev. Thanks to this incredible program, JNF has helped take the Kabbalistic symbolism of the farmer and turn it into a reality.

Fig תאנה

Take the fig in your hand, raise it and say:

אל תִּירָאִי אֶדְמָה גִּילִי וְשִׂמְחִי כִּי הִגְדִּיל ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת: אֵל תִּירָאֻ בְּהֵמוֹת שָׂדֵי
כִּי דָשְׂאוּ נְאוֹת מִדְּבַר כִּי עַץ נִשְׂא פִּרְיוֹ תֵּאֲנָה וְנֶכֶן נָתַן חֵילָם: (יואל ב:כא-כב)
*Have no fear, O land; rejoice and jubilate, for the Lord has performed
great things. Fear not, O beasts of the field, for the dwelling places of the
wilderness have become covered with grass, for the trees have borne their
fruit, the fig tree and the vine have given forth their strength. (Yael 2:21-22)*

רמי בר יחזקאל נודמן לבני ברק, ראה עיזים שרעו תחת תאנה, נטף הדבש
מן התאנה והחלב ניגר מן העיזים ונתערבבו זה בזה, אמר: הרי "זבת חלב
ודבש", אייר יעקב בן דוסתא: מלוד לאונו שלשה מילין. פעם אחת קדמתי
בנשי, והלכתי עד קרסולי בדבש של תאנים. (כתובות קיא)
*Rami, the son of Yechezkel, visited Bnei Brak and he saw goats grazing
under a fig tree. Honey dripped from the fig tree and milk from the goats
and both intermingled. He said, "Behold! A land flowing with milk and
honey". (Ketubot 111b)*

עוד נאמר במדרש: למה נמשלה התורה לתאנה: שרוב האילנות—הזית
התמר והגפן—נלקטים כאחת, והתאנה נלקטת מעט מעט. כך התורה:
היום לומר מעט ולמחר מעט, עד שלומד כולה. (במדבר רבה יב)
*Why is Torah compared to a fig tree? Because most trees, like olives,
grapes and dates, have their fruit picked at one time. But the fig tree
is picked gradually. So it is with Torah. One learns a little today, and
most of it later. It is not learned in only one year, or even in many years.
(Bamidbar Rabah 12)*

יהי רצון שנישא כפרי התאנה ונעלה מחיל אל חיל, אמן!
*May we be elevated like a fig and rise up from strength to strength,
Amen!*

Cut the fig open, check for bugs and enjoy eating the fig!

Figs and Am Yisrael

Rav Shalom and Effi Krell

Shlichim, TanenbaumCHAT Kimel Campus

The fig is special and unique, even within the Seven Species that Erez Yisrael has been blessed with.

The wheat and barley's chaff is thrown out and only the grain is eaten. The grape, the olive and the date's pip is thrown out and only their flesh is eaten. The pomegranate's peel is thrown out and only its seeds are eaten. However, the fig is eaten in its entirety.

When Hosheah wants to describe the Galut (exile), he prophesies: "And I will lay waste her vine[s] and her fig tree[s]" (2:14) and when Micha wants to describe the Geulah (redemption) he Prophesies: "And they shall dwell each man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them move, for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken. (4:4). The fig tree being metaphor for the Galut and Geulah is no coincidence. When the Galut comes along the whole fruit, from the peel to the pip, is wasted. However the flipside of the coin is that when the Geula comes around it is also complete.

Maybe this is the reason Rabbi Yochanan says in the Sifrey: "It will be like a fig tree which is narrow below and broad above. So Jerusalem will one day expand on all sides until it reaches the gates of Damascus, and all the Exiles will come and rest beneath it...". We will all be redeemed together and united in Jerusalem "The city that makes all of Israel friends" (Yerushalmi Chagigah 3:6), no matter what type of Jew one is—peel, flesh or seed in the fig—we are all part of the same fruit!



Pomegranate

רימון

Take the pomegranate in your hand, raise it and say:

כְּחוּט הַשָּׁנִי שֶׁפְּתוּתִיךָ וּמִדְּבַרְךָ נֶאֱוָה כְּפֶלֶח הַרִימון כִּשְׂפָתְךָ מִבְּעַד לְצִמְתְּךָ:
(שיה"ש ד:ג)

Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your speech is comely; your temple is like a split pomegranate from within your kerchief. (Shir HaShirim 4:3)

דומה כפלח הרימון שהוא מלא תרי"ג גרעינים, כן עצמותה מלאה אורות שכליות אלוקות. (מלבים על שיה"ש שם)

The pomegranate is filled with 613 seeds, which represent the 613 Mitzvot. So too, the essential soul is filled up with the lights of spiritual understanding. (Malbim's commentary on Shir HaShirim 4:3)

יהי רצון שנרבה מצוות כרימון, אמן!

May we have many Mitzvot like a pomegranate, Amen!

Enjoy eating the pomegranate!

Pour the third glass of wine. The third glass should be three quarters red and one quarter white, symbolizing summer.

Raise the glass and say:

הריני מוכן ומזומן לשתות כוס שלישית של ט"ו בשבט

Hareini Muchan Umezuman lishtot kos shlishit shel Tu Bishvat

I am ready and willing to drink the third glass of the Tu Bishvat seder

Don't judge a book by its cover

Rav Yisrael and Tehila Zadok

Shlichim, Netivot HaTorah Day School

In Masechet Brachot, Chazal say: "One's brow is like a split pomegranate – even the 'empty ones' of Israel obey the mitzvot like a pomegranate."

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky asks, why are the "empty ones" among Am Yisrael compared to the brow of the head? (The temple in Hebrew is *haker*, which is close to the word *hakir*, meaning "empty").

His answer was that the brow is a *mashal*: every body part has its unique feeling and function – our heart beats when we breathe in and out. It seems like it has nothing in it. But of course, as we know, that is not true. The brow is where the brain is hiding, the source of all our thoughts, feelings and vitality.

That is like the fruit of the tree. With most fruit, we can tell by looking at it if it is ripe, sweet and ready to be eaten. But when one looks at the pomegranate, there is no way to know. From the outside, it looks hard and dry, but it is cut open you can find a juicy sweet fruit.

Sometimes, people look like they are hard and dry from the outside, but that is only what masks the true Jewish soul, the *neshama*.

Chazal say: Your brow is like a split pomegranate – even the "empty ones" among you are filled with mitzvot like a pomegranate is filled with seeds! Never judge a book by its cover. You never know what is hiding behind the hard exterior!

Etrog אתרוג

Take the Etrog in your hand, raise it and say:

וְלָקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן, פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים, וַעֲנַף עֵץ-עֵבֶת,
וְעֵרְבִי-נָחַל; וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם, לִפְנֵי ה', אֱלֹהֵיכֶם—שִׁבְעַת יָמִים: (ויקרא כג:מ)
פרי עץ הדר הוא האתרוג.

And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of the beautiful tree (hadar), branches of palm trees and the boughs of thick-leaved trees and willows of the brook and you shall rejoice before the Lord your G-d seven days. (Vayikra 23:40)

The “eit z hadar”(beautiful tree) is the Etrog tree.

פרי עץ הדר—אלו בני ישראל, מה אתרוג יש בו טעם וריח, כך ישראל יש בהם בני אדם שיש בהם תורה ויש בהם מעשים טובים. (ויקרא רבה שם)
“Pri eitz hadar – a beautiful fruit” – this symbolizes the Jewish people.
Just as an Etrog has both a taste and smell, so too Israel has people that have both Torah and good deeds. (Vayikra Rabah)

יהי רצון שבכולנו יהיה כל טוב כאתרוג, אמן!

May we be full of goodness like an Etrog, Amen!

There is a minhag to say the following Tefillah for a beautiful Etrog:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקיי אבותינו שתברך כל איילות האתרוג
להוציא פרותיהם בעתם ויוציאו אתרוגים טובים יפים ומהדרים ונקיים
מכל מום ולא יעלה בהם חזזית, ויהיו שלמים ולא יהיה בהם שום חסרון
ונאכלו עקיצת קוצ, ויהיו מצויים לנו ולכל ישראל אחינו בכל מקום שהם,
לקיים בה מצות נטילה עם הלולב בחג הסכות שיבא עלינו לחיים טובים
ולשלום באשר צויתנו בתורתך ע' י משה עבדך וְלָקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן
פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים וַעֲנַף עֵץ עֵבֶת. ויהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקינו ואלקיי
אבותינו שתעזרנו ותסייענו לקיים מצוה זו של נטילת לולב ויהיה
ואתרוג כתיקונו בזמנה בחג הסכות שיבא עלינו לימים טובים ולשלום
בשמחה ובטוב לב, ותזמין לנו אתרוג יפה ומהדר ושלם וכשר כהלכתו.

Etrog – a lesson in beauty

Yaron and Elliezra Perez

Shlichim, YU/Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash

Zichron Dov of Toronto

One year, before the holiday of Sukkot, Haim Beer, a student of the famed Tzaddik Rabbi Aryeh Levine, saw his Rebbe enter an Etrog store on Yaffo Street in Jerusalem. Knowing that many pious individuals are quite meticulous about buying the most beautiful Etrog, he followed his Rebbe into the store to see what he looks for when purchasing an Etrog. He entered the store and was shocked by what he saw: Rav Aryeh Levine walked up to the vender, asked for a “beautiful Etrog,” took the first Etrog he got, placed it into his bag and left the shop.

Haim did not understand: Rav Aryeh did not pore over his Etrog meticulously, nor did he check it for blemishes! He ran after Reb Aryeh and asked him why he just took the first one and walked away.

Reb Aryeh answered, “There are two Mitzvot in the Torah that use the word ‘hadar’ – beautiful. To take a ‘pri eitz hadar’ – a beautiful fruit on sukkot, and ‘vehadarta pnei zaken’ – to beautify the elderly.” Reb Aryeh continued, “Most people focus on the first, while I am rushing to visit an elderly friend in the hospital – I am focusing on the beauty of the second Mitzvah.”

May the beauty of the Etrog allow us to see beauty in others and in the kind deeds we do.



Apple תפוח

Take the apple, raise it and say:

**תַּתְּפּוּחַ בְּעֵצֵי הַנֶּזֶר כֵּן יְדוּדֵי בֵּין הַבָּנִים בְּצֵלוֹ חֲמִדָּתִי
וְנִשְׁבְּתִי וּפְרִיָּו מְתוֹק לְחֻכִּי: (שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים ב:ב)**

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

(Shir HaShirim 2:2)

מה **תפוח** זה אינו גומר פירותיו אלא בסיון, כך לא נתנו ישראל פירותיהם אלא בסיון שהוא חודש מתן תורה. רבי עזריה אומר: מה **תפוח** משעה שמוציא ניצניו ועד שגומר פירותיו חמישים יום, כך בני ישראל, משעה שיצאו ממצרים ועד שקיבלו את התורה חמישים יום.
(ילקוט שמעוני, שיר השירים שם)

Just like the apple only ripens in the month of Sivan, similarly, Am Yisrael only ripened in the month of Sivan, the month of the giving of the Torah. Rabbi Azariah says: Just like the apple, from the time of its budding until it ripens, takes fifty days, similarly, the Children of Israel from the time they left Egypt until they received Torah – fifty days. (Yalkut Shimoni, Shir HaShirim 2:2)

**יְהִי רָצוֹן שֶׁכְּתֻפּוֹחַ נִשְׁבַּ תְּמִיד בְּצִילוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ
בְּרוּךְ הוּא, אָמֵן!**

May we be like an apple tree and always rest in the shade of Hashem, Amen!

Enjoy eating the apple!

Apples are us!

Dikla Weitzner

Director, Moshava Ba'ir Toronto

Aside from using apples during Rosh Hashana to symbolize having a sweet new year, apples symbolize a profound idea about the Jewish people.

One of the fruits to which Jews are compared to in Shir HaShirim is the apple, as it says: "As the apple is rare and unique among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved, Israel, amongst the maidens (nations) of the world."

Why is Israel the beloved amongst other nations? And how does this compare to the apple?

Rav Kook explains that when Moshe Rabbeinu gave the Torah to Am Yisrael at Har Sinai, the people called out: "And he took the Book of the Covenant and read it within the hearing of the people, and they said, "All that the Lord spoke we will do and we will hear."" (Shemot 24:4-7). Even before they understood what was wanted of them, they accept G-d's words.

Trees usually first grow their leaves, and only after do the fruit blossoms begin to show. The leaves are there for protection – to protect the fruit from the elements, the sun. Not so with the apple tree. The fruit grow first, to get as much sun as needed to start off with and only then the leaves grow, to give them protection. First they bud and then they have time to grow in the shade.

So too the Jewish people: First we get the light from Hashem: "We do", and after that we have time to sit and learn: "and we will understand!"

Our connection to G-d is like our connection with the Land of Israel. Wherever we are, our hearts are with the Land. Like the apple, the Jews and the Land of Israel stand even with all the hardships, even when we don't understand why we feel this connection so strongly and work so hard for it, we overcome and continue to be sweet, positive and optimistic throughout.

Almond

שקד

Take some almonds in your hand, raise them and say the following:

וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרָת וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה אֶל אֹהֶל הָעֵדוּת וַתֵּהָנֶה פָּרַח מִטֵּה אֶהֱרֹן לְבֵית לֹוִי וַיֵּצֵא
פָּרַח וַיֵּצֵץ צִיץ וַיִּגְמַל שְׂקָדִים: (במדבר יז:כג)
*And on the following day Moses came to the Tent of Testimony, and behold,
Aharon's staff for the house of Levi had blossomed! It gave forth blossoms, sprouted
buds, and produced ripe almonds. (Bamidbar 17:23)*

ולמה שקדים? הוא הפרי הממהר להפריח מכל הפירות. (רש"י שם)
*Almonds were ripening on [Aharon's staff] because the almond tree is the
quickest to sprout (it is the first tree to blossom in spring). (Rashi's commentary on
Bamidbar 17:23)*

והנה פרח מטה אהרן וגו': זה סימן לכהנים גדולים נושאים ציץ נזר הקודש.
ויגמול: בזכות וירץ אל תוך הקהל וגו' כדי לעצור המגפה ובזכות שכהנים
זריזים הם כגמול ידו השיב לו להצמיח שקדים שיש בהם משמעות לשון
שקידות ומהירות. (כלי יקר שם)
*Aharon's staff produced almonds. It symbolizes diligence and haste. Aharon was
quick to run into the midst of the people to stop the plague. (Kli Yakar's commentary on
Bamidbar 17:23)*

יהי רצון שנמהר ונשקד לעשות רצון ה', אמן!

May we always hurry and be diligent to do the will of Hashem, Amen!

Enjoy eating the almonds!

Pour the fourth and final glass of wine. The fourth glass should be red wine, symbolizing fall.

Raise the glass and say:

הריני מוכן ומזומן לשתות כוס רביעית של ט"ו בשבט

Hareini Muchan Umezuman lishtot kos revi'it shel Tu Bishvat

I am ready and willing to drink the fourth glass of the Tu Bishvat seder

Almonds of all colours

Aviad and Hodaya Pituchey Chotam
Shlichim, Bnei Akiva Schools

The blossoming almond tree has become one of the more well known symbols of Tu Bishvat, among other reasons, due to the famous song.

Additionally, the almond is one of the only fruits that has become part of everyday spoken Hebrew, even in our non-agrarian culture. It serves as a simile for dedication, consistency, diligence, or in one word: שקדנות (perseverance).

The first to coin the etymological use of the almond tree was Hashem himself in his words to Yirmiyahu the Prophet: "And the word of Hashem came to me, saying: What do you see, Jeremiah? And I said, "I see a rod of an almond tree. And Hashem said to me; You have seen well, for I hasten (שוקד) My word to accomplish it".

Later on, Shlomo Hamelech laid the foundation for the elite commando unit Sayeret Shaked, when he said, "If Hashem will not guard a city, its watcher keeps (שקד) his vigil in vain" (Tehillim 127:1).

A third and final context for the almond is neither prophetic nor military, rather artistic: "And on the menorah were four decorated goblets (משוקדים) its knobs and its flowers" (Shemot 37:20).



Concluding remarks

Ariel and Oshrat Erani

Shlichim, TanenbaumCHAT Wallenberg Campus

"Eretz-Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here – their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped." This quote, from the declaration of the state of Israel, while very inspiring, is not so faithful to the truth.

Actually the Jewish nation was born outside its homeland, and was on a journey to it pretty much ever since. From our forefather Avraham who traveled the desert from Haran to Kena'an to years later, the children of Israel, when they were redeemed from Egypt received a book that would change their fate forever in the desert. If we fast forward through Jewish history, countless historical moments and dramatic occurrences took place outside their beloved land – yearning for it, but living without it.

Usually our discussion revolving around Eretz Yisrael was done from afar – through the eyes of the deprived, the denied and the exiled. We spoke about how the redemption would appear, or how the world would look after its coming. A few thousand years later Shai Agnon addressing his Nobel prize would sum up the secret to our survival and strength in the Diaspora, when asked where he was from he answered, "As a result of the historic catastrophe when Titus of Rome destroyed Jerusalem and Israel was exiled from its land, I was born in one of the cities of the Exile. But always I regarded myself as one who was born in Jerusalem." Our secret was the yearning.

The challenge lies ahead. Being in our land makes things more challenging than before. What now will give us the strength to be energized from within? How can we illuminate our path once more? It's in our hands.

A growing tree of life

Jonny Lipczer

Shaliach, Bnei Akiva of Toronto

"It is a tree of life to those who grasp it, and those who uphold it are happy." (Mishlei 3)

Torah is at the core of Bnei Akiva, and as we mark Tu B'Shvat, the New Year for Trees, we renew our commitment to the Torah, our own tree of life.

There is a Midrash that describes two kinds of readers of serious books. The first is like a person who squeezes grapes with only their fingertips, extracting from them mere watery juice. When it fails to ferment, they immediately blame the grapes.

The second is like a person who crushes grapes thoroughly, extracting from them all their richness. Such a person is never moved to complain, for what they lay down will readily ferment, and they are left with the most excellent wine.

Through Mizrahi Canada's expansion and growth – of which Bnei Akiva is proud to be a part – we are all playing our part in extracting the richness of the Torah, and spreading it further. May we all enrich ourselves with Torat Eretz Yisrael, and spread them further to enrich others too.

לשנה הבאה בירושלים הבנויה!

Remember to recite Al Hamichya



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DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Daniel Safran ▪ safran.daniel@gmail.com

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