

## Etrog - the “goodly fruit”

The fruit generally used here is the *etrog*, citron, the fruit of the Four Species used in the *lulav* at Sukkot. Its shape is that of a pure, golden heart and it has the sweetest of fragrances. It is referred to as *pri etz hadar*, “fruit of the majestic tree” (Leviticus 23:40).

At this point Hassidic Jews pray that God will enable them to find a perfect *etrog* for use on the following Sukkot, and often people eat jam that has been made from the *etrog* used the previous Sukkot.

As we partake of this fruit by enjoying its fragrance, we express our trust in God that He will purify our hearts and enable us to carry the fragrance of His Presence in our lives and to spread it wherever He takes us. Amen!

But thanks be to God, who in Messiah always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. (2 Corinthians 2: 14)

May we be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May we be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. (Colossians 1: 9-12)



# A Tu B'Shevat Seder

Thanking God for the Fruit of the Trees  
and for Redemption

Keren Golan Pryor

The three central themes of *Tu B'Shevat* are:

- (a) giving thanks and praise to God for His creation of the tree and fruit,
- (b) recalling our beginning in the Garden of Eden, with the Tree of Life in the center, and the relationship we enjoyed there with our Father, and
- (c) creating greater awareness of our task of restoring the 'Garden' and of how we can actively participate in God's unfolding plan of Redemption by caring for our environment, both physically and spiritually.

The importance of song in the praise of God is emphasized at *Tu B'Shevat*. On *Shabbat Shirah* (Sabbath of Song) which occurs around the time of *Tu B'Shevat*, the Torah portion *Beshalach* (Exodus 13: 17 -17: 16) is read. The *parasha* includes the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea and the subsequent drowning of Pharaoh's army. Praise for God's deliverance at the realization that the Israelites were finally set free from slavery is expressed in the mighty "*Shirat haYam*", the "Song at the Sea" (Exodus 15: 1-18), when the reality of God as King of the universe is first recorded. This wonderfully corresponds with the "Song at the Crystal Sea" in Revelation 15: 3-4, at the time of the Ultimate Redemption when the redeemed sing "The Song of Moses *and* the Song of the Lamb."

*Shabbat Shirah* falls in the middle of winter and it is customary to put out breadcrumbs or birdseed to feed the birds on this day. The eye of the Great King is also on the sparrow, and we can be His open hand in feeding them at a time when finding food is difficult. The song of the birds is lifted to the heavens in constant praise to their Creator, and they remind us to do the same.

**Plant something!** You can plant a tree in Israel via [www.jnftrees.com](http://www.jnftrees.com). And/or, tend to the trees in your yard and maybe plant something new. Otherwise, plant something indoors.

## Prayer for Israel

*We offer praise and thanks, Father, for the miracle of restoration that You have brought about in the land of Israel even in our days. We rejoice that the 'desert is blooming as a rose' and that we have seen fulfillment of Ezekiel 36: 8, "And you, mountains of Israel, you shall give forth your branches and you shall bear your fruit for My people Israel, for they shall soon come." We pray for the safety and the peace of Jerusalem, and of all Israel. Amen.*



## THIRD CUP (half white, half red)

The **third type of fruit** is comprised of those that are completely edible (grapes, figs, blueberries). These are associated with the realm of Creation (*beriyah*), in all the perfection the Creator intended. Things are coming to their full potential - you can even eat the seeds! Truly see yourself as a new creation in Messiah; as the beautiful, unique person that God created you to be, fulfilling all the potential He has placed within you for His glory in the earth. Praise His Holy and wonderful Name!

We can rejoice that He makes all things beautiful in His time!  
(Ecclesiastes 3: 11)

(Song: Great is Thy Faithfulness)

## FOURTH CUP (all red)

Finally, we drink the fourth cup. We thank our Father that He has placed eternity in our hearts, also that He has made the way for *all* to come into the fullness of knowledge of Him and to experience the joy of His Presence through our Savior - Messiah Yeshua. The shedding of His blood in atonement for sin has brought life where there was death, healing where there was brokenness, and hope where there was despair.

*HalleluYah! Le'chaim - to Life Eternal!*

There is no fruit that can fully correspond with the pure heavenly realm of *atzilut*, God's perfect holiness. Thus, it is customary to partake of the **fruit with the best fragrance!** Fragrance is intangible and yet powerfully intimates a presence. The Song of Songs is replete with beautiful imagery of fragrance and fruit, for example:

"Awake, O north wind, and come, O south wind! Blow upon my garden; let its fragrance be wafted abroad. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits. (Song of Songs 4: 16)

Consider that the edible part can be compared to purity and perfection, and the inedible part with impurity and deficiency. They correspond with the earthly level of existence (*assiyah*). As we live in the physical world the pressures of materialism can restrict and enslave us. We need to remove the ‘shells’ imposed by the world to allow the goodness within to be released and given expression. On the other hand, exposure to the ways of the world can defile us and we need a ‘shell’ to protect our inner beings. Wisdom lies in knowing when to discard the confining shells and when to retain a shell of protection.

As we eat this fruit, we express our trust in God that He will enable us to withstand the negative effects of undue materialism and that our characters will mature and our good deeds will grow and come forth in fruitful profusion like the seeds of the pomegranate.

(If water was used for the first cup, say *Pri haGaffen* blessing now)

### SECOND CUP (white with drops of red)



We lift this **second cup**, white with drops of red, in thanks and praise for the potential that our Creator has planted in each of our lives, and that He who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it! (Philippians 1:6)

Now we eat the **second type of fruit**, those with inedible pits (dates, olives, peaches). These are connected with spiritual growth (*yetzirah*). The edible fruit represent holiness and the pits impurities that have penetrated the holiness and are buried in our souls. As we grow in holiness and move forward from potential to realization, the inedible pit is not wasted. Once we bring it into the light of truth, it is a seed with the potential to grow new life. Ask Abba to reveal a sinful trait in your life, a pit buried in your heart, such as anger, impatience, greed, pride. Really ‘see’ it and ask that it will no longer hold you back but that, through the power of God’s Holy Spirit, it will become an asset in your life.



## Prayer for Israel

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## Blessing for Bread

We no longer can bring the first fruits of our labor to the Temple in Jerusalem as a praise and thanks offering, instead we offer the fruit of our lips to our Father in Heaven for His provision of trees and fruit. He is the provider of all good things and we offer Him our grateful thanks and joyful praise.

(Song: Hodu le’Adonai ke tov)

We begin by eating grain from the earth and savor each bite of the bread in appreciation that God loves us and created everything for our good. We thank Him for Yeshua, whom He raised from the earth as the Bread of Life:

(Say blessing over bread or challah)

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haOlam, hamotzi lechem min ha’aretz.*

Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.

## Blessing for the Fruit of the Vine

During the *Tu B'Shevat Seder* it is customary to drink four cups of wine, or grape juice, similar to the Passover Seder. A tradition has arisen that reflects the blooming of trees and flora in Israel that takes place during the two month period between the holiday of *Tu B'Shevat*, on the fifteenth of *Shevat*, and the festival of *Pesach* (Passover), on the fifteenth of Nissan.(1)

The first cup one drinks is white wine or grape juice, reflecting the pure white array of almond blossoms that first cover the landscape at the end of winter.

The second cup is pale pink (white with drops of red added), reflecting the white and red anemones and the white broom brushes that adorn the land during the months of Shevat and Adar.

The third cup is darker pink, illustrating the growing number of red and darker hued tulips and flora that begin to balance the decreasing amount of white.

The fourth cup is all red, reflecting the carpets of bright red poppies glistening on hill and field by Passover, in the month of Nissan. They resemble countless droplets of blood freely scattered throughout the Land; indeed reminiscent of the Blood of the Lamb shed at just this season.

The white represents inherent potential and red, the potential fulfilled - the promise in full bloom. We can also recall the first miracle performed by Yeshua, at the wedding in Cana, when he took clear water and turned it into red wine. He illustrated that all the potential and promise of the Word finds its fulfillment in Him, the Living Word - the Water of Life. Water can therefore also be used for the first cup, and water with wine/grape juice added for the subsequent cups until the fourth cup which can be all wine/juice. We rejoice that "as wine makes glad the hearts of men" so the Word of God brings hope and joy to the spirit!

(Proclaim the blessing over the first cup that includes wine/grape juice)

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haOlam,  
Borei pri hagaffen.*

Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the Universe,  
Who creates the fruit of the vine.

(If using water for the first cup, or in addition to, you can say)

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haOlam,  
She'natan lanu mayim chayim, b'Yeshua Meshicheinu*

Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the Universe,  
Who gave us Living Water in Yeshua our Messiah

(Song: U'shafta mayim b'sasson mi'ma'anei ha  
Yeshua)



## Blessing for Fruit

Adam and Eve sinned by eating the fruit forbidden to them, causing man's exile from the Garden. We will now eat fruit in thankfulness that in the righteousness of our Messiah, Yeshua, we can eat all the good things provided by God as food. May our lives bear the fruit of righteousness in love, for the sake of His Name.

We first eat fruit with inedible shells or peels (pistachio, pomegranates, avocado)

(All select one or two - before eating the first fruit proclaim the blessing)

*Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haOlam,  
borei pri ha'etz*

Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the Universe,  
Who creates the fruit of the tree.