



# The Tu BeShevat Seder





## What is Tu BeShevat all about?

- *Tu BeShevat* is the name given to the fifteenth day of the month of *Shevat* in the Hebrew calendar [*Tu* is the combination of the Hebrew letters *Tet* and *Vav*, which together have a numerical value of fifteen.] This day, otherwise known as “the New Year for trees,” is a turning point for certain laws relating to tree fruits. It also symbolizes the importance that trees and fruit play in life in this world.
- It is customary on *Tu BeShevat* to eat the seven species of fruit for which *Eretz Yisrael* is praised (a.k.a. the *Shivat Haminim*), as well as other fruit that are symbolic of the Jewish People or of man.
- *Tu BeShevat* is the day that marks the end of the previous agricultural year, and heralds the beginning of the coming year. It comes after the main part of the winter rainy season. All fruit that are on the trees before *Tu BeShevat* are considered to belong to the previous year’s crop, while the new fruit that appear after *Tu BeShevat* are of the coming year. This has several ramifications for the laws of produce that grows in *Eretz Yisrael*.
- The reason *Tu BeShevat* is called “the New Year for trees” is because on that day the future shape and appearance of every tree is fixed, for good or otherwise. And since a person is

compared to a tree, this is an auspicious day for praying for the success of one’s endeavors in the coming year.

- It is customary to wish others “*shannah tovah umevoretchet*,” “may you have a good and blessed year,” as one does on *Rosh Hashanah*. A hint to this comes from the acronym of the name “*Shevat*” – *Shannah Beruchah veTovah*, a blessed and good year.
- *Tu BeShevat* is considered a festive day, and so, we do not say *tachanun* as part of our prayers, nor are public fasts fixed on it.
- When *Eretz Yisrael* began to be resettled after an exile of almost two thousand years, the festival of *Tu BeShevat* was rejuvenated. The early settlers would go out on this day and plant thousands of fruit trees, the benefits of which we are still reaping today.
- One should give preference to buying fruit from *Eretz Yisrael*, as opposed to elsewhere, because the fruit of our Land is more special, and also, to support our own farmers.
- *Tu BeShevat* also points to the importance of preserving nature and its ecosystems. *Adam HaRishon* was instructed to preserve the Creation, as the *Midrash* states: When *Hashem* created *Adam HaRishon* He took him around to see all the trees of *Gan Eden*, and said to him: ‘See how beautiful and special my creations are. Everything I created was for you to utilize. Make sure not to ruin and destroy My world, because if you do, who will fix it.’





## Man and the Tree

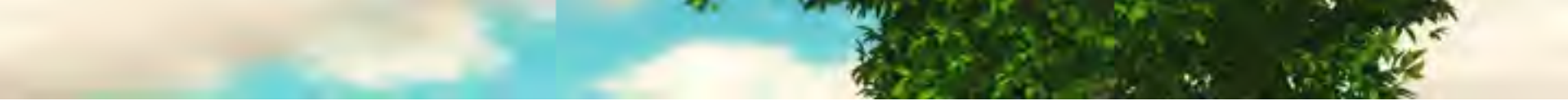
When *Tu BeShevat* comes around, this is normally the season of strong winds, freezing weather and incessant rain. Trees appear quite forlorn, being leafless and fruitless; one might almost feel sorry for them.

Outwardly, the trees look quite pitiful. Their glory and splendor are gone, showing no signs of leaves or fruit. But under the surface, a process of rejuvenation is taking place. The tree is beginning to rebuild its strength, and come back to life. Although we cannot see anything yet, new energy is coming in via the tree's roots. The sap is rising through the trunk and into the branches, and small buds can be seen here and there. Almond trees begin to blossom, and the sun starts to come out more. The revival of all trees is beginning to take shape, and soon they will be covered in buds.

It is written in the *Torah*, "For a person is like a tree of the field," because people also have periods of decline and waning, times of fatigue and weakening, feelings of detachment and instability. But just like a tree, a person can also feel a sudden resurgence of strength, a return of youthful vigor. He is undergoing a similar process, and will begin to blossom anew, and rise in all his glory.

## Parallels of Man and a Tree:

- Just as a mature tree comes into being from one seed, so, from small investments, doing another mitzvah here or a worthy deed there, a person can accumulate tremendous reward.
- A tree is formed from a small seed, which turns into a seedling and then into a stalk, and eventually into a trunk, from which branches will sprout. As time passes, the tree's development becomes more and more impressive. So too, a person begins his life as a tiny infant, develops into a child, a youth, and finally, a mature adult with his own integral stability, who branches out, forming his future progeny.
- When a seed is planted in the ground it first decomposes, and only then can develop into an erect tree. Similarly, a person can only grow through humility, but not through pride and arrogance.
- One may attach a solid post to a young sapling to help it grow straight, but once the tree has grown and its trunk becomes sturdy, it is no longer possible to straighten it. Likewise, a person can form his character while he is young and flexible. But, whatever change he does not achieve in his youth, is much harder to attain later on in life.



- The greater the investment, the greater the returns. The more one puts into a tree's development, the more beautiful its fruit will be. Correspondingly, in life, the more one puts into something, the greater its fruits of success will be.
- A tree never tires; every year it brings forth more fruit. So too, a person must make sure to always be productive, and not fall into stagnation or inactivity.
- A tree derives its nourishment from water, without which it cannot survive. The nourishment of a Jewish person is from the *Torah*, which is compared to water. Without it, a person is like "a fish out of water," for which nothing else can help.
- The roots of a tree are hidden from sight and submerged deep into the ground. So too, the roots of every Jew go back all the way to our forefathers, in whose merit our nation has survived for thousands of years.
- The stronger a tree's roots are, the more it will be able to withstand strong winds. Similarly, a person with fine character traits and good deeds will be much more able to weather life's changes.



- Just as unnecessary watering and excessive fertilization of a tree can damage it, so too, a person should not pursue his bodily needs, whims and wishes to an extreme.
- Just as a tree requires sunlight, so, a person needs guidance from an *Torah* scholar, who can light up the way for him.
- Poisonous fumes can damage a tree, just as a destructive atmosphere can ruin a person's positive development.
- Fruit-bearing trees are nobler than non-fruit-bearing ones, which tend to make a lot of noise in the wind. Similarly, there are people who lack content, but like to make a ruckus, while other superior people build themselves and contribute greatly to their families and surroundings in an unassuming way, without much fanfare.







## The Festival Order

- At the table, set specially for the *Chag*, we place the seven types of produce for which *Eretz Yisrael* is praised, as well as other fruits, too.
- Foods from “the seven types” include: Bread – wheat, beer – barley, wine – grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates.
- Some partake of *etrog* jam, made from *etrogim* that were used for the *mitzvah* on *Succot*.
- We say the blessing “*Shehechianu*” on a new fruit that we have not yet eaten this year.
- We must take care to say the *berachot* in their correct order.
- If we are going to wash our hands to eat a meal, then the *berachah* of *hamotzi* is first, and exempts us from certain other *berachot*.



- If we are not washing our hands, we first say the *berachah* of “*mezonot*” on some baked goods, and then, “*boreh pri hagefen*” on wine. Following this, we say “*boreh pri ha’etz*” on an olive and “*boreh pri ha’adamah*” on a fruit like a banana, or on some vegetable. At the end, we say the *berachah* “*shehakol*” on some drinks (if one has not blessed over wine). At the end, if we washed hands for bread, we say “*birchat hamazon*”, otherwise, we say “*berachah me’ein shalosh*.”

### Why do we say a *berachah* before eating?

- *Chazal* said that one is forbidden to benefit from this world with first saying a blessing. And whoever does so is as if he is stealing from *Hashem*. Everything in the world belongs to Him, and He allows people to use it, after they say a blessing, thanking Him for His beautiful world and the tasty and nutritious fruit that He prepared for us.
- The word *berachah* is derived from the word *berechah*, which means “pool,” since anyone who says a *berachah* with the correct intentions, has a pool of heavenly abundance open to him.



## תפילה של הבן איש חי

### לפני שאוכלים את הפירות, אומרים תפלה זו שחבר הבן איש חי:

ויאמר אלקים תדשא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע עץ פרי עשה פרי למינו אשר זרעו בו על הארץ ויהי כן. ותוצא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע למינהו ועץ עשה פרי אשר זרעו בו למינהו וירא אלקים כי טוב:

אנא ה' הושיעה נא, היום הזה לאילן הוא ראש השנה.

אנא ה' הצליחה נא, היום הזה לאילן הוא ראש השנה.

אנא ה' הרויחה נא, היום הזה לאילן הוא ראש השנה.

אנא ה' היטיבה נא, היום הזה לאילן הוא ראש השנה.

אל נא פצה נא שנה זו משמיר ונשית, וברך עץ שקמו וזית. אל נא במטר ריה חרבוני ושימון, וברך גפן ותאנה ורמון. אל נא רומם עצרת עוללי טפוחים, וברך אגוז ותקור ותפוחים. אל נא צדקה מעמך בל יפסק, וברך חרוב וקרטמל ופארסק. אל נא חלץ קהלה אשר אליך תערג, וברך התנות והאגוז והאנתרג:

ויהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלמינו ואלמי אבותינו, שבכח סגלת אכילת הפירות שנאכל ונברך עליהן עתה, ונאשר נהגה בסוד שרשיהן העליונים אשר הקמה תלויים בם, להשפיע עליהן שפע רצון ברכה ונדבה, גם הממנים והמשטרים עליהם יתמלאו מעו שפע הודך לשוב שנית להגדילם ולהצמיחם, מרשית השנה ועד אחרית השנה, לטובה ולברכה, לחיים טובים ולשלום. השקיפה ממעון קדשך מן השמים, וברך עלינו את השנה הזאת לטובה ולברכה, תשיתהו ברכות לעד, תתדהו בשמחה את פנינו, ונתנה הארץ יבולה ועץ השדה יתן פריו, ועליהם תבוא ברכת טוב, להתברך פרותיה במעינו, אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט. וכל הניצוצות שנתפארו על ידינו או על ידי אבותינו, ובעונן אדם הראשון אשר חטא בפרות האילן, עתה ישובו להתכלל בעו הדר עץ החיים

### Prior to eating the fruit, it is customary to say the following prayer, composed by the Ben Ish Chai:

“And G-d said, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation, seed-yielding herbs and fruit trees producing fruit according to its kind, in which its seed is found, on the earth,’ and it was so. And the earth brought forth vegetation, seed-yielding herbs according to their kind, and trees producing fruit, in which their seed is found, according to their kind, and G-d saw that it was good.”

Please, Hashem, save us, as today is Rosh Hashanah for the trees. Please, Hashem, grant us success, as today is Rosh Hashanah for the trees. Please, Hashem, give us abundance, as today is Rosh Hashanah for the trees. Please, Hashem, benefit us, as today is Rosh Hashanah for the trees.

Hashem, please protect us this year from thistles and thorns, and may the oil and olive trees be blessed. Hashem, please satiate the desolate ground with rain, to be blessed with grapes, figs and pomegranates. Hashem, please elevate the gathering of Your beloved children, and bless the nuts, apples and dates. Hashem, please, may Your charity to your Nation never cease, and bless the carob, exotic fruit and peach. Hashem, please rescue the congregation who are pining for You, and bless the berry, nut and etrog.

May it be Your Will, Hashem, our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers, that through the merit of eating these fruits and reciting their blessings, and mentioning their hidden roots in the upper worlds upon which they are dependant, that You shall willingly grant them abundance, and that those appointed over them be filled with the strength of Your abundant glory, to make them grow and sprout forth with goodness and blessing, from the beginning until the end of the year, for a good and peaceful existence. Observe us from Your Holy Abode in Heaven, and bless this year to be full of good and abundance. Establish it forever with blessing, and may Your Countenance gladden it, so that the ground bring forth its produce, and the trees its fruit. May they receive Your blessing, to be digested well and satiate us, whatever we partake of them. And all the sparks of holiness that were scattered due to our actions or those of our ancestors, and the sin of Adam haRishon, who sinned with the fruit of the tree - may they all return now, to be included in the awesome glory of the Tree of Life.

## Wheat - חיטה

We have printed this booklet according to the order that the Seven Types (Shivat Haminim) appears in the Torah. However, regarding what blessing to make first, please see page 9

We read the verse (*Devarim* 8:8), "אֶרֶץ חִטָּה וְשֵׁעֵרָה וְגִפְנֵי וּתְאֵנָה וְרִמּוֹן אֶרֶץ זֵית שֶׁמֶן וְדִבְשׁ" "A land of wheat and barley, vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of oil-producing olives and honey."

We take a piece of cake, and recite the following blessing בְּרִיךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְנֵי מְזֻנּוֹת. "Blessed are You, Adonai, our G-d, King of the Universe, Who creates different types of nourishment."

The head of the family blesses the wheat by reciting the verse (*Tehillim* 147:14), "הַשָּׁם גְּבוּלָה שְׁלוֹם חֶלֶב, חֲטִיִּם יִשְׂבְּעֶנָּה" "Within your borders He makes peace; with the best of the wheat He will sate you." One may pray that there should be peace in one's household, and an abundance of sustenance and income.

Wheat is one of the most important plants in the history of mankind. It is a principle source of nutrition for people, and among various cultures is considered the main staple, especially in the Mediterranean Area. Wheat is mentioned about thirty times in the *Torah*, as the chief and most basic plant of *Eretz Yisrael*, and the most common type of produce in ancient times. According to one opinion, the Tree of Knowledge that *Adam* and *Chavah* ate from in the Garden of Eden, was a wheat tree, which at that time reached the height of a cedar tree.

### Context:

The Jewish People are compared to wheat, since both are valuable to their owners, and are measured and counted. The Jewish People were counted when they went down to Egypt, and on several occasions in the desert, showing how much G-d treasured them, like a man who constantly counts his money.

### Insight:

Wheat comes in the form of a seed wrapped in a peel and surrounded by chaff. To be able to use it, one needs to separate the edible part from the waste. So too, every person has a good nucleus, which often is covered by waste. We must seek to uncover the light within our fellow man.

### Story:

In days gone by, kings would levy annual taxes on the farmers in an arbitrary fashion, having nothing to do with the actual produce that grew in their fields. There were places where the farmers were required to fill a room that measured ten meters by ten meters, with wheat, and this would be their yearly contribution to the king. The tax collectors would go for town to town, collecting this statutory amount of wheat, and bring it to the king's storehouses.

Some clever farmers, who had difficulty paying this exorbitant tax, which was completely unreasonable, were forced to trick the tax collectors. So, they built two rooms, measuring five meters by five meters, and explained to the officials that they were unable to build one room of ten meters by ten meters, so, they built two rooms of five by five. The officials did not understand the difference, and gladly took the produce that was in the two rooms. However, the farmers got away with paying half the required amount, as twice five times five is fifty, while ten times ten is one hundred...

## שעורה - Barley

We read the verse (*Yeshaya* 28:25), **“הֲלוֹא אִם־שָׁנָה פָּנִיָּה וְהַפִּיץ קִצְחָה וְכַמֵּן יִזְרַק וְשֵׁם חֲטָה שׁוֹרָה וְשִׁעֲרָה נִסְמָן”** **“וְכִסְּמָת גְּבֻלְתּוֹ”** “Is it not so? When he smooths its surface, he scatters the black cumin and casts the cumin, and he places the prominent wheat, and the barley as a sign, and the spelt on its border.”

We pour a cup of black beer, containing barley malt, and say the following blessing, (if we have not blessed over wine) **“בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדַבְּרוֹ”**. “Blessed are You, Adonai, our G-d, King of the Universe, Who everything came to be through His word.”

Barley is the fourth most popular grain in the world, following wheat, rice, and corn, and the second of the seven types for which *Eretz Yisrael* is praised. Although it is used widely in soups, breads and health products, its chief use is as animal fodder and in the manufacture of alcoholic drinks.

### Context:

When we had the *Bet Hamikdash*, a meal offering was brought on the second day of *Pesach*, comprising of an *Omer* measurement of barley.

What is the significance of this offering being made of barley? When the Jewish People left Egypt, they followed *Hashem* like animals follow their shepherd, with complete trust and faith, without asking why they were going into a desert. In the merit of their absolute faith, they received the *Torah* and inherited *Eretz Yisrael*. To commemorate this, an offering of animal fodder is brought on *Pesach*.

### Insight:

During the plague of hail, one of the ten plagues that befell Pharaoh and the Egyptians for refusing to release the Jewish People from slavery, the *Torah* relates, “Though the flax and the barley have been broken, for the barley have already ripened, and the flax is in the stalk.” The flax and barley were smitten by the plague of hail, unlike the wheat and spelt, which were unaffected.

What the reason for this? And what did *Hashem* seek to show Pharaoh? The difference between the flax and barley, and the wheat and spelt, was that the former already had hardened stalks at the time, and stood erect, while the latter only had soft stalks, which bent in the wind. This was a lesson for Pharaoh, that one who is arrogant and does not subjugate himself before those stronger than him, will end up being broken. While those who are flexible, and can defer to those stronger than them, will be able to overcome hardships and survive.

### Story:

This happened one *Rosh Hashanah* morning, on the Day of Judgement. In the *Bet Hamedrash* of the *Chozeh of Lublin*, all the Chassidim were ready to commence the prayers, but surprisingly the *Tzaddik*, *Rabi David* of *Lelov*, was missing. The *Chozeh* would not allow them to begin praying without *Rabi David*. “Let us wait till he comes, as a sign of respect for him.” Time was passing and it was getting late, so some of the Chassidim went out to look for him. They found him standing next to a horse, holding a bucket of barley kernels, and feeding it with great patience. It seemed that the horse’s owner had hurried to shul, and had left his horse hungry... *Rebi David*, who was known for his outstanding compassion, could not just ignore the discomfort of the horse, and ran to find some barley to feed it, as the *Torah* commands us to do. The students stood there in amazement, learning what it means when it says, “and His mercy is upon all His works.”



## Grapes - גפן

We read the verse (*Tehillim* 80:15), "אלקים צבאות שובנא הבט משמים וראה ופקד גפן זאת" "O G-d of Hosts, return now; look from heaven and see, and be mindful of this vine."

We pour a cup of wine, and say the blessing, "ברוך אתה ה', אלקינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי הגפן". "Blessed are You, *Adonai*, our G-d, King of the Universe, Who created the fruit of the vine."

We bless the vine by reciting the verse (*Tehillim* 128:3), "אשתך כגפן פריה בירכתה ביתך" "Your wife will be as a fruitful vine, in the innermost parts of your house."

Grapes have particular importance, as they are used to produce wine, about which it is written, "and wine gladdens man's heart." Also, grapes are considered to be a food and a drink, all in one. Because of the significance of wine, *Chazal* instituted a unique blessing for it, and also instructed us to make kiddush on a cup of wine on *Shabbat* and *Chagim*, and to bless over a cup at wedding and *brit milah* ceremonies.

### Context:

The Jewish People are compared to the vine. The fruit of the vine are trampled and squeezed underfoot when they are placed in the winepress, but end up becoming exquisite wine that is served at royal banquets. So too, the Jewish People suffer persecution and oppression at the hands of the nations of the world, but their outstanding greatness will become apparent to all with the coming of *Mashiach* (May this happen speedily in our days). Also, just as vines can only grow in soft and fertile ground, but not in hard and rocky terrain, so, the Jewish People will do best when they will live in *Eretz Yisrael*, and have independence from all foreign nations.

A wife is also likened to a vine, as it is written, "Your wife will be as a fruitful vine, in the innermost parts of your house." She has a covenant with her husband, and is exclusively faithful to him, as the vine, which is generally unaffected by infestation of bugs, and is the only fruit that cannot be grafted with another. Also, the woman of the house is called the "*akeret habayit*," as she is the mainstay of the home, being there to help her husband.

### Insight:

The vine has no trunk. Its branches are long and pliable, and require poles to support them. So too, a person at the beginning of his journey through life, does not yet have the perception or resilience to be able to stand up alone to all challenges. He therefore relies on the adults around him, his parents and teachers, from whom he gets support and guidance for life.

### Story:

There was once a guest invited to a rich miser for a meal. During the proceedings some expensive wine was brought out, and the guest helped himself to a full cup of it. The host looked at him begrudgingly, and said: "This wine is very strong. I would advise you not to drink it straight, but to dip your bread in it, and eat it like that." The guest understood his mean host's intention, and proceeded to take a large hunk of bread, and soak up the entire cup of wine into it. His infuriated host exclaimed, "Even those who left Egypt did not behave like you, because if they would have, they would not have needed the miracle of *kriyat Yam Suf*, they would have just soaked up the sea in their bread..."



## Figs - תאנה

We read the verse (*Mishlei 27:18*), "נֹצֵר תְּאֵנָה יֹאכַל פְּרִיָּהּ וְשֹׁמֵר אֲדֹנָיו יִכְבֵּד" "He who guards a fig-tree shall eat its fruit, and he who guards his master shall be honoured."

We take a ripe or dried fig, cut it in half, and then, carefully check it in a bright light for bugs. After that, we may eat it. It is preferable to soak the figs beforehand in water, and to clean them well.

Figs are the first fruit to be mentioned in the *Torah*, when it says that *Adam* and *Chava* sewed girdles for themselves from fig leaves. There is an opinion that the Tree of Knowledge was a fig tree. The fig is one of the seven types of produce for which *Eretz Yisrael* is praised. Archeological findings indicate that they grew here thousands of years ago, and since they never underwent modification, they grow today much the same way as they did then. Figs were traditionally dried and pressed into slabs.

### Context:

The *Torah* is compared to the fig tree. On most fruit trees, all the fruit ripens and is picked at about the same time, while the produce of the fig tree ripens and is picked at different intervals. Similarly, the *Torah* can only be learnt in stages, but not all in one go. And just as when one searches between the leaves of the fig tree, one can find fresh fruit, so too, whenever one learns words of *Torah*, one will find new aspects of understanding.

### Insight:

Just as the produce of the fig tree can only be harvested in stages, so too, when one embarks on a project, it cannot be completed in one go. Objectives that are accomplished too quickly are likely to disappear at the same pace. To arrive at one's desired goal, one needs to work methodically, step by step, until one safely arrives at one's destination.

### Story:

One of the oft-used praises of *Eretz Yisrael* is that it is "a land overflowing with milk and honey," which is interpreted to mean – the milk of goats and the honey of dates and figs. In the times of the *Bet Hamikdash*, the Land of Israel brought forth produce in amazing abundance, and everyone was fed plentifully. It is told that once the *Tanna, Rabi Yonatan ben Elazar* was sitting in the shade of a sturdy fig tree, which had many branches full of beautiful, big figs. The morning dew had already settled on its branches, but as the sun began to shine, the dew evaporated, and honey began to drip freely from the figs, forming rivulets under the tree. Suddenly, a large, well-built goat appeared and started lapping up the honey that had dripped from the figs. Since its udders were already full, droplets of milk began falling onto the ground, mixing with the honey. When *Rabi Yonatan* observed this, he was overcome with excitement at the awesome abundance of the Holy Land. He called his students over, saying, "See with your eyes an example of *Olam Haba!*" Our Sages tell us that the great abundance which the inhabitants of *Eretz Yisrael* merited then, was because of the offerings that were offered daily in the *Bet Hamikdash*. (From the *Midrash Tanchuma*)

## Pomegranates - רימון

We read the verse (*Shir Hashirim* 6:7), "כְּפֶלֶחַ הַרְמוֹן רִקְתָּהּ מִבַּעַד לְצִמְתָּהּ" "Your temple is like a split pomegranate from beneath your kerchief."

Take a fresh pomegranate, cut it in half, and bang the back of the pomegranate over a plate with help of a large metal spoon, until all its seeds fall out. Select the seeds that look edible and eat them.

Since ancient times, the pomegranate has been considered a prestigious fruit. It was very common in Eretz Yisrael, and symbolized abundance and fruitfulness, beauty and wisdom. Its form was perpetuated on ancient mosaics and coins, and many settlements in the days of the *Tanach* incorporated it within their name.

The pomegranate was marketed widely in ancient times. A papyrus from the times of Rameses III mentions the import of pomegranates from *Eretz Yisrael* to Egypt, thousands of years ago. The pomegranate is served as a food, and may even be used for alcoholic beverages. It has a sweet, tart taste, and its juice may also be used for cooking purposes. Its seeds are used to decorate and garnish fruit platters.

Girls are identified with the pomegranate and walnut, as it is written (*Tehillim* 45:14), "All honour [awaits] the King's daughter who stays within," as these fruits symbolize the inner content and modesty that they have.

### Context:

Jewish people are compared to a pomegranate, as even the ignorant among them, who have not yet been exposed to the light of *Torah*, are packed full of *mitzvot*, like the seeds of a pomegranate. It is said that some pomegranates contain 613 seeds, corresponding to the 613 *mitzvot* in the *Torah*. The eminent members of our nation are compared to the crown of the pomegranate, as they are replete with wisdom and understanding, yet, they keep it hidden out of humility, just as the pomegranate stores its numerous seeds inside, out of view.

### Insight:

The pomegranate is used in the metaphor, "he found a pomegranate, ate its contents and discarded its peel," which describes taking the main part and leaving the excess. This originated from a quote about *Rabi Meir*, who learned *Torah* from *Elisha ben Avuya*, who had left the path of *Torah*. *Rabi Meir* took only the positive ideas from him, but not his heretical thoughts. So, a person should learn how to extract the positive from everything, understanding how to differentiate between the main and the superfluous, the good and the bad.

### Story:

Over a hundred and fifty years ago, when the Jewish population in *Eretz Yisrael* was still quite sparse, a Jewish family made *Aliyah* from Poland. When they arrived at the gates of *Yerushalayim*, a pleasant surprise awaited them. There stood a Jewish peddler, who offered them a beautiful, red and juicy fruit. The new immigrants gazed at the fruit, but could not recognize it. They were very excited when the peddler told them that this was a pomegranate, for which *Eretz Yisrael* is famous. The father paid the peddler, and took the pomegranate with great excitement. He cut it into pieces, and gave it out to his family. Since they had never tasted it before, they did not know that one is meant to eat the seeds, and discard the peel. Instead, they did the opposite – they threw away the seeds, and tried eating the peel, which was very bitter. When the children complained about the taste, and said that it wasn't sweet at all, their father calmed them down by saying, "Evidently, we are not yet worthy of the holiness of the fruit of *Eretz Yisrael*, and therefore, cannot taste its sweetness." From there they went to the *Kotel Hamaaravi*, and prayed with tears that they should have the merit to feel the holiness of the Land, and be able to taste the sweetness of its fruit. When the father later discovered how they were meant to eat the pomegranate, he told his children, "If someone does not appreciate the holiness of the Land and the sweetness of its fruit, the fault lies with him!"



## Olives - זית

We read the verse (*Yirmiyahu* 11:16), "זית רענן יפה פרייתאר קרא ה' שְׁמֶךָ." "A leafy olive-tree, abounding with sizeable fruit, has the L-rd called your name."

Taking a complete olive in one's hand, one recites the blessing, בּוֹרֵא אֱתָהּ ה', אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא "ברוך אתה ה', אלוהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי העץ." "Blessed are You, Adonai, our G-d, King of the Universe, Who created the fruit of the tree," having in mind that it should be also for all the tree fruits that one will eat at this meal.

We bless over the olive, as it is written (*Tehillim* 128:3), "בְּנֵיהֶם כְּשֵׁתֵי זֵיתִים סְבִיב לְשֻׁלְחָנְךָ" "your sons will be like olive shoots around your table."

The olive tree is always green, and can survive for hundreds of years. It is one of the trademarks of Eretz Yisrael, and many can be found growing there, some of them centuries old.

Olives are used mainly for producing olive oil, which is an important and qualitative oil, used both for eating and lighting purposes.

### Context:

The Jewish People are compared to the olive. While most drinks will mix to form a homogenous mixture, (olive) oil will separate and stand apart. So too, the Jewish People keep their identity unique, and do not intermingle with the other nations. And just as the olive tree never sheds its leaves, so, the Jewish Nation shall never be annulled. The olive tree will not accept the graft of another type of tree, so too, the Jewish People guards its unique identity throughout the generations.

### Insight:

To extract pure olive oil is a lengthy and laborious process. Gathering the olives is a procedure in itself, involving shaking the tree and banging it. Afterwards, the olives are crushed, and placed under a heavy weight, until the oil begins to ooze from them. Finally, the olives are pulverized and ground, so that the remainder of the oil can be extracted, till the last drop. This is reminiscent of all our endeavors in life. One cannot achieve anything without work, effort and toil, but in the end it is worth it.

### Story:

At the end of the Flood that *Hashem* brought on the world, *Noach* sent a dove out of the Ark, to see if the water had been absorbed into the ground, so they could leave the Ark. The dove returned towards evening with an olive branch in its beak. This was a sign to *Noach* that the Flood was over, and that they could leave the Ark. But of all things, why did the dove bring back an olive branch? Our Sages explain, that it wanted to convey the message, "I would rather eat food that is as bitter as olives, as long as it is mine and I receive it directly from *Hashem*, than it be as sweet as honey, but dependent on mankind." This teaches us an important lesson in life, not to be reliant on the benevolence of others, or wait for someone else to do the work for us. Rather, we should try to manage by ourselves, using our own G-d given abilities and resources.





## Dates - תמר

We read the verse (*Tehillim* 92:13), "צַדִּיק כַּתְּמָר יִפְרַח כְּאֶרֶז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה" "The righteous one flourishes like the palm; as a cedar in Lebanon he grows."

We take ripe dates, remove the pits, wash them, check them for worms and eat them.

The honey that is mentioned in the *Torah* in connection with the *shivat haminin*, is not bee honey, but honey extracted from dates. Dates may be eaten either fresh or dried, have a very sweet taste, and are long in appearance. The syrup extracted from them is called "silan," and is used mainly to flavor desserts and cakes.

The date palm is a tall, majestic tree that can grow to a height of twenty meters. On its top, branches extend outwards, and underneath them one may find clusters of dates. From the date palm we get the *lulav* branch, one of the four species that is taken on the festival of *Sukkot*. The biggest date palm plantation in *Eretz Yisrael* is in a kibbutz called *Tirat Zvi*. The Jordan Valley also has large date palms. Most of the dates that are sold are of a species called *Mag'hul*, which grow in an area of 20,000 dunams, and are known for their high quality.



### Context:

The Jewish People are compared to the date, which only has one single pit, since they too, have only one single aspiration – towards their Father in Heaven. One of the characteristics of the date palm, is that every part of it is used. The *lulav* branch is used for the festival of *Sukkot*, its other branches are used to cover the sukkah, and its fibers are used to make ropes. The frond leaves from which the dates hang, are used to make broom heads or wickerwork baskets. So too, the Jewish People do not have any rejects, as every Jew has his own intrinsic value, and together they form one nation.

### Insight:

The date belongs to the group of fruits whose outer layer is eaten, and whose inner part is discarded. There are fruits, such as almonds and oranges, whose inner part is eaten, and whose outer layer is thrown away. There is a third group, whose both outer and inner parts are eaten, such as the fig and the apple. Similarly, there are three types of people. There are those who show themselves outwardly to be good, but inwardly, are rotten. There are others, who hide their good inner qualities and do not show them outwardly. And yet another group, whose appearance fits their inner-self, they are good and straight, both inwardly and outwardly.

We should try to belong to the third group, or at least to the second one, but certainly not from the first group.

### Story:

The *Tzaddik*, *Rebi Yechezkel of Stropkov*, was always extremely careful to check a fruit before eating it, in case it contained bugs, which are forbidden to eat. Once, he was a guest in New York, and some Chassidim came to his lodgings to spend time with him. When his host brought a platter of fruit to the table, including fresh dates, one of the guests stretched out his hand and took a few dates. The *Rebi* stopped him straight away, saying, "It is very important to check dates before eating them, in case they contain worms. Without checking them one could easily come to transgress serious prohibitions from the *Torah*." Among the guests was an American Rabbi, who was very surprised at this, and said out loud, "What is there to check in dates? The custom here in America is only to check cherries, which are sometimes infested. But who checks for worms in fresh fruit in America? What is there to be worried about?" The *Rebi* did not react. Instead, he took the first date that came to hand, and opened it up before all assembled. All were amazed to see a big worm moving around in the middle of the date! Those present were left open-mouthed, and the live demonstration made a strong impression on them. How careful we all have to be, to only eat fruit that has been checked!



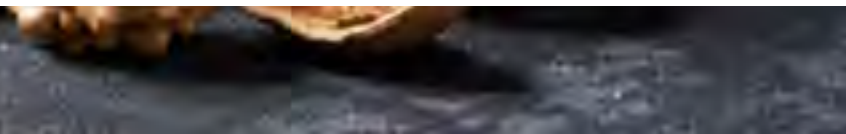
## Walnuts - אגוז

We read the verse (*Shir Hashirim* 6:11), "אֶל־גַּנַּת אֶגּוֹז יֵרְדֹתִי לְרֵאוֹת בְּאֵבֵי הַנַּחַל לְרֵאוֹת הַפְּרֻחַת הַגֶּפֶן הַיַּנְצִי הַרְמִינִים" "I went down to the nut garden, to see the green plants of the valley, to see whether the vine had blossomed, the pomegranates were in bloom."

The custom is to eat various types of nuts, after opening them and checking them for worms.

### Context:

The Jewish People are likened to the walnut, which does not reveal its wonderful contents until one breaks open its shell, and takes out the tasty flesh from inside. Similarly, all members of *Am Yisrael* act modestly, and do not boast about themselves. Only after putting them to the test, will they reveal their superior inner qualities. Additionally, a walnut can even fall in the mud and still be used, since after one cleans its shell, it is still fit for eating. Likewise, a Jewish person, despite his negative actions, is always able to cleanse himself, and lift himself up again to follow the King's path.





## תפוח - Apple

“מי זאת עלה מן־המדבר מתרפקת עלי־דודה תחת התפוח עוררתיה, *Shir Hashirim* (8:5), שְׁמָה חֲבַלְתָּהּ אִמִּי שְׁמָה חֲבַלְתָּהּ יְלֻדְתָּהּ” “Who is this coming up from the desert, embracing her beloved? Under the apple tree I aroused you; there your mother was in travail with you; there she that bore you was in travail.”

One eats slices of apple, without having to recite another blessing, since we already said, “Who creates fruit of the tree.”

One may dip the apple in honey, as is the custom on *Rosh Hashanah*, as an omen for a good and sweet year. When dipping the apple in the honey, one says the quotations, *תחת התפוח עוררתיה*, “Under the apple tree I aroused you,” “Honey and milk are under your tongue.”

### Story:

The *Admor of Ger*, known as the “*Lev Simchah*,” was once approached by one of his Chassidim, who poured out his heart to him, telling him about his terrible predicament. The tax authorities had valued his assets, and having concluded that he was extremely wealthy, levied high charges against him. All his pleas to understand that he was not well off fell on deaf ears, and they froze all his accounts. The *Rebi* listened attentively to the man, and finally, handed him an apple, as he was accustomed to do with many of his Chassidim. The man returned home, feeling encouraged and hopeful that *Hashem* would save him. He gathered his household together, and told them about the apple that he received from his saintly *Rebi*. They all wanted to have a piece of the apple that had been blessed by the *Rebi*. The man took a knife, and cut the apple into slices, and then into small squares, so that there would be enough for the numerous members of his household. Just then, there was a knock on the door, and officials from the tax authorities had come to check out this man’s standard of living. To their great astonishment, they saw a large family gathered around, eager to receive a small morsel of a single apple... This sight touched their hearts, and soon the man received a letter announcing that the case against him had been closed permanently.



## אתרוג - Etrog

“ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר כפת תמרים, ויוציאו אתרוגים”  
“And you shall take for yourselves on the first day, the fruit of the *hadar* tree, date palm fronds, a branch of a braided tree, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the L-rd, your G-d, for a seven day period.”

We eat some *etrog* jam, preferably made from an *etrog* that was used for the *mitzvah* on *Sukkot*.

We recite the special prayer composed by the *Ben Ish Chai*, to have the merit of having a beautiful-looking *etrog* on the coming *Sukkot*. It is interesting to note that the numerical value of the Hebrew word “*etrog*” is the same as that of “*Torah*”:

## מתפללים תפלה מיחדת שחבר ה"בן איש חי"

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו, שתברך כל אילנות האתרוג להוציא פרותיהם בעתם, ויוציאו אתרוגים טובים יפים ומהדרים ונקיים מכל מום ולא יעלה בהם תזזית, ויהיו שלמים ולא יהיה בהם שום חסרון ואפלו עקיצת קוץ, ויהיו מצויים לנו ולכל ישראל אחינו בכל מקום שהם, לקיים בה מצות נטילה עם הלולב בחג הסוכות שיבא עלינו לחיים טובים ולשלום, כפי אשר צויתנו בתורתך על ידי משה עבדך ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר כפת תמרים וענף עץ עבת וערביי נחל. ויהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו, שתעזרנו ותסייענו לקיים מצוה זו של נטילת לולב והדס וערבה ואתרוג בתקונה, בזמנה בחג הסוכות שיבא עלינו לקיים טובים ולשלום בשמחה ובטוב לב, ותזמין לנו אתרוג יפה ומהדר ושלם וכשר פה לכתו. ויהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו, שתברך כל מיני האילנות ויוציאו פרותיהם ברבוי שמנים וטובים, ותברך כל הגפנים שיצא ענבים הרבה שמנים וטובים כדי שיהיה הין היצא מהם מצוי לרב לכל עמו ישראל לקיים בו מצות קדוש ומצות הבדלה בשבתות ובמים טובים, ויתקיים בנו ובכל ישראל אחינו מקרא שכתוב 'לך אכל בשמחה לחמך ושתה בלב טוב יינה כי כבר רצה האלהים את מעשיך'. באתי לגני אחתי כלה ארתי מורי עם בשמי אכלתי יערי עם דבשי שתיתי ייני עם חלבי אכלו רעים שתו ושכרו דודים'. יהיו לרצון אמרי פי והגיון לבי לפניך ה' צורי וגואלי.







### A Special Prayer from the *Ben Ish Chai* for an Etrog

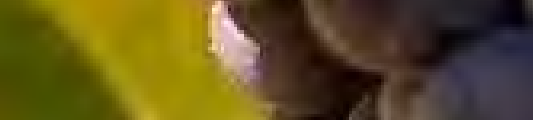
May it be Your Will, *Hashem*, our G-d, and the G-d of our forefathers, that You bless all of the *etrog* trees to bear their fruit at the proper time, and that they shall bear *etrogim* that are good, nice, beautiful, and clean from any blemish, and that no lichen should come upon them, and that they shall be complete and not have any deficiencies, even a prick of a thorn. These *etrogim* should be available for us and for all of Israel in every place that they are, to fulfill the *mitzvah* of taking [the *etrog*] with the *lulav* on the Holiday of *Sukkot*, that shall come to us with a good life and peace, as You have written in Your *Torah*, that was handed down by *Moshe*, Your servant, “And on the first day you shall take for yourselves a beautiful fruit of the tree, date frond, and branch of a myrtle tree, and [branches from a] willow brook...” (*Vayikra* 23:40) May it be Your Will, *Hashem*, our G-d, and the G-d of our forefathers, that You help us and assist us in this *mitzvah* of taking the *lulav*, myrtle, willow, and esrog, in the proper manner, in its proper time, on the Holiday of *Sukkot*, that shall come upon us for a good life and peace, with happiness and good-heartedness, and that You shall make a nice, beautiful *etrog* [that is] clean [of all

blemishes and deficiencies], and complete, and kosher, according to its laws, accessible to us.

May it be Your Will, *Hashem*, our G-d, and the G-d of our forefathers, that You bless all varieties of trees, that they give forth substantial and good fruit in abundance. Please bless the grapevines to give forth many substantial and good grapes, so that the wine which is made from them should be available in abundance for Your entire nation, Israel, to use in the fulfilment of the *mitzvot* of *Kiddush* and *Havdalah* on *Shabbat* and festivals.

May the following verses be realized in us and all of Israel, our brothers: “Go, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a glad heart, for G-d has already approved of your deeds.” “I have come to my garden, my sister, [my] bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my sugar cane with my sugar, I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, beloved ones.

May the expressions of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favour before You, *Hashem*, my Rock and Redeemer.



**At the conclusion of the meal (if one has not eaten bread)  
one recites the following after-blessing:**

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם

אִם אָכַל מִזֹּנוֹת יֹאמֵר עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְעַל הַפְּלִפְלָה

אִם שָׁתָה יַיִן יֹאמֵר (וְ)עַל הַגֶּפֶן וְעַל פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן

אִם אָכַל פְּרוֹת מִשִּׁבְעַת הַמַּיִמִּים יֹאמֵר (וְ)עַל הָעֵץ וְעַל פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

וְעַל תְּנוּבַת הַשָּׂדֶה, וְעַל אֶרֶץ חֲמֻדָּה טוֹבָה וְרַחֲבָה, שְׂרָצִית וְהִנְחַלְתָּ לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ, לְאָכַל מִפְּרֵיהָ וּלְשַׂבֵּעַ מִטּוּבָהּ. רַחֵם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ עַלֵינוּ

וְעַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹךְ, וְעַל יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִירָךְ, וְעַל הַר צִיּוֹן מְשֻׁכָּן כְּבוֹדָךְ, וְעַל מִזְבִּיחֶךָ וְעַל הַיְכָלֶךָ. וּבִגְוַה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּמַהְרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ,

וְהַעֲלֵנוּ לְתוֹכָהּ, וְשִׁמְחֵנוּ בְּבִנְיָנָהּ, וּנְבָרְכֶךָ עָלֶיךָ בְּקֹדֶשׁ וּבְטָהֳרָה:

בְּשַׁבַּת וּרְצַח וְהַחֲלִיצָנוּ בְּיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת הַזֶּה

כִּי אַתָּה טוֹב וּמְטִיב לְכָל, וְנוֹדֶה לְךָ [יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ] עַל הָאָרֶץ

מִזֹּנוֹת וְעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְעַל הַפְּלִפְלָה שֶׁל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל מִזְבֵּיחֶהָ וְעַל פְּלִפְלֶתָהּ.

יַיִן וְעַל פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן שֶׁל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל פְּרֵי גִפְנָה

כִּירוֹת וְעַל הַפְּרוֹת שֶׁל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל פְּרוֹתֶיהָ

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, עַל הָאָרֶץ וְעַל

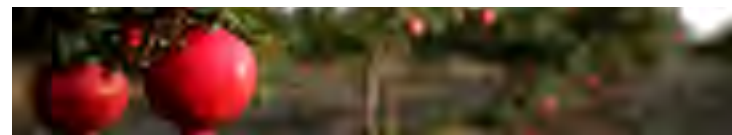
מִזֹּנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְעַל הַפְּלִפְלָה: שֶׁל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִזְבֵּיחֶהָ וְעַל פְּלִפְלֶתָהּ:

יַיִן פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן: שֶׁל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל פְּרֵי גִפְנָה:

כִּירוֹת הַפְּרוֹת: שֶׁל אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל פְּרוֹתֶיהָ

Blessed are You, *Adonai*, our G-d, King of the Universe, for the sustenance and the nourishment, for the vine and the fruit of the vine, for the tree and the fruit of the tree, for the produce of the field, and for the precious, good, and spacious land, which You have graciously given as a heritage to our ancestors, to eat of its fruit and to be satiated with its goodness.

Have mercy, *Adonai*, our G-d, on Israel Your people, on Jerusalem Your city, on Zion the abode of Your glory, on Your altar, and on Your Temple. Rebuild Jerusalem, the holy city, speedily in our days, and bring us up to it and make us rejoice in it, and we will bless You in holiness and purity. For You, *Adonai*, are good and do good to all, and we offer thanks to You for its sustenance and nourishment, its fruits and the fruit of its vine. Blessed are You, *Adonai*, for the land and for its sustenance, its fruits and the fruit of its vine.



This publication is dedicated with much love by

**Rachel Adjmi & Alan Kaimowitz**

to their wonderful children,  
grandchildren & great-grandchildren  
and their families



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**Shalom LaAm Bank Information:**

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