

# TU B'SHEVAT SEDER

## (1) FRUIT

On *Tu B'Shvat*, we eat the fruit by which *Hashem* praises the *Eretz Yisroel*. As the verse says: "The trees have borne their fruit, fig tree and vine have yielded their strength. Children of *Zion* be happy, rejoice in the Lord, your God!" (*Yael* 2:22-23)

*if you have a preference, eat the fruits in the order you most enjoy. Otherwise the order of eating should be: olives, dates, grapes, figs, pomegranates.*

### **Olives:**

"God called your name "a green olive tree, nice and beautiful fruit." (Jeremiah 11:16)

"Your children shall be like olive plants around your table." (Psalms 123:3)

The Sages taught: "Just as olive oil brings light into the world, so do the people of Israel bring light into the world." (Midrash - Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:2)

### **Dates:**

"The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree" (Psalms 92:13), The righteous are fruitful and sweet, just like a date palm.

"Your stature is like a palm tree" (Song of Songs 7:8). Just as the palm tree doesn't bend or sway, so too the Jewish people.

"No part of the palm tree is wasted. The dates are for eating; the *Lulav* branches are for waving in praise on *Sukkot*; the dried thatch is for roofing; the fibers are for ropes; the leaves are for sieves; and the trunk is for house beams. So too, every one of the Jewish people is needed. Some are knowledgeable in Bible, others in *Mishnah*, others in *Aggada*. Still others perform many *mitzvot*, and others give much charity." (Midrash - *Bamidbar Rabbah* 3:1)

### **Grapes:**

"Just as a vine has large and small clusters and the large ones hang lower, so too the Jewish people: Whoever labors in *Torah* and is greater in *Torah*, seems lower than his fellow [due to his humility]." (Midrash - *Vayikra Rabbah* 36:2)

### **Figs:**

Rabbi *Yochanan* said: "What is the meaning of 'He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit'? (Proverbs 27:18) Why is the *Torah* compared to a fruit tree? Figs on a tree do not ripen all at once, but a little each day. Therefore, the longer one searches in the tree, the more figs he finds. So too with *Torah*: The more one studies, the more knowledge and wisdom one finds." (Talmud - *Eruvin* 54a)

### **Pomegranates:**

"Even the sinners of Israel are as filled with *Mitzvot* as a pomegranate is filled with seeds."

## (2) WINE:

*At the Tu B'Shvat seder, it is traditional to drink four cups of wine, as is done at the Pesach seder.*

- *First Cup - pure white*
- *Second Cup - pale pink (white with a drop of red wine)*
- *Third Cup - darker pink (with more red added)*
- *Fourth Cup - almost totally red (with only a drop of white)*

### **A participant says:**

White wine represents nature in potential. Red wine represents nature in full bloom. On this day, we begin to leave the winter behind and move into a period of renewal and life.

It is stated in the **Zohar**: "Wine has two colors - white and red. White is from the right side [of kindness]; red from the left side [of strength and judgment]."

### **A participant says:**

"Wine rejoices the heart of man." This refers to the wine of Torah. **Yayin** (Hebrew for wine) equals 70, the numerical value of **Sod**, meaning "secret." [Wine represents the hidden aspects of the Torah.] ("Zohar" - **Parshat Pinchas**).

### ***Pour the first cup of wine (all white):***

We now eat **fruits with inedible shells or peels**. For example: nuts, pomegranate, oranges, avocado. The edible part of the fruit corresponds to perfection and purity, while the inedible is connected to deficiency and impurity. This is parallel to the realm of action (**asiah**), the lowest of the spiritual worlds — a world which is enveloped by materialism, just as the fruit is enveloped in its peel/shell.

Rabbi **Tarfon** compared the Jewish people to a pile of walnuts. If one walnut is removed, each and every nut in the pile is shaken and disturbed. So too, when a single Jew is in distress, every other Jew is shaken. (**Midrash - Shir HaShirim Raba**6:11)

### **Meditation:**

As you toss away the peels and shells, see one of your bad character traits (anger, impatience, etc.) being tossed away. In your mind's eye, picture the bad trait as the shell. Then, as you toss it away, feel the trait leaving you- That's not the real you. The real you is the fruit... delicious and nourishing. See the trait going into the garbage.

### (3) CUPS 2, 3,4

\*

#### *Drink the second cup - pale pink (white with a drop of red).*

We now eat **fruits with inedible pits**. For example: dates, olives, peaches, plums, cherries. This stage is comparable to the realm of formation (*yetzirah*).

The edible parts of the fruit represent holiness. Pits represent impurities which have penetrated the holiness.

As the color of the wine begins to get darker, we can start to see potential turn into reality. The inedible part has now moved from the outside to the inside of the fruit. This is an advancement toward purity. In addition, the inedible part is no longer waste; it is a seed with potential to grow.

#### **Meditation:**

Imagine one of your bad traits as this seed. **Really** see it. Then, see that trait growing and developing into something great. This trait no longer holds you back, but propels you forward. Many great people have turned their faults into assets. You too can become great.

#### *Drink the third cup of wine (dark pink).*

Now we eat **fruits that are completely edible**: blueberries, etc. This is the realm of creation (*briah*).

#### **Meditation:**

Things are coming close to their full potential. Even the seeds are now edible. They not only have future potential, but are also delicious and ready to eat right now.

#### *Drink the fourth cup (red with a drop of white).*

### (4) CONCLUSION

#### **The leader says:**

Eating 12 different fruits is significant, since this corresponds to the 12 different arrangements of the four-letter ineffable Name of God. Upon eating the 12th fruit, we recite the verse:

"And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit each person under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken" (*Micah* 4:3-4)

#### **A participant says:**

"Rabbi Abba taught: There is no more revealed redemption - no greater indication of the impending redemption - than that which the verse (*Ezekiel* 36:8) states: "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." (Talmud -*Sanhedrin* §8a)

*Rashi* explains: When the Land of Israel will give fruit bountifully, this is an indication of the impending redemption, and there is no greater indication than this.