

ultimately led us into the land of Israel through the miraculously dry bed of the Jordan River. This is a new beginning.

Every soldier in the Israeli army is inducted with the same master story of our people:

Now arise, cross this Jordan, you and the entire people, to the land that I give to the Children of Israel. Every place upon which the sole of your foot will tread, I have given to you...Be strong and courageous do not fear and do not lose resolve, for G-d is with you wherever you will go. (Joshua 1:2-9).

Our second cup symbolizes *Briah*, or creation- not fully formed and complete, but the beginnings of germination. The beginnings of an idea for example. It is not white but blush, just a little fuller, a little closer to the harvest. Join me in drinking from our second cup.

★ There is no better place than the Jordan Valley to understand that Judaism teaches us to draw hope from our collective ability to shape a better world through our everyday actions. We are going to engage in sweet Torah study from Talmud Taanit 23a.

יומא חד הוה אזל באורחא חזייה להווא גברא דהוה נטע חרובא אמר ליה האי עד כמה שנין טעין אמר ליה עד שבעין שנין אמר ליה פשיטא לך דחיית שבעין שנין אמר ליה האי [גברא] עלמא בחרובא אשכחתיא כי היכי דשתלי לי אבהתי שתלי נמי לבראי

One day, Honi HaMagel was walking along the road when he saw a certain man planting a carob tree. Honi said to him: This tree, after how many years will it bear fruit? The man said to him: It will not produce fruit until seventy years have passed. Honi said to him: Is it obvious to you that you will live seventy years, that you expect to benefit from this tree? He said to him: That man himself found a world full of carob trees. Just as my ancestors planted for me, I too am planting for my descendants.

Honi HaMagel planted for the future with no expectation of reward or recognition. We can also seed hope in others with small selfless actions. Now we will partake of fruit that has small seeds. There is no relationship between the size of the seed and the size of the tree into which it grows. We learn from this that we can't anticipate how much our small actions can mean to

DISCUSSION: What small things do you do to insure a hopeful future for yourself and others?

Fruits with multiple small seeds

Please join me in reciting the blessing over the wine:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן
Blessed are You Lord, our G-d, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

In this world of proximity, we eat fruits with hard outsides and edible insides. Each of these fruits symbolizes hidden potential. As we celebrate Tu B'Shevat, the *Shkeidiah*, or almond tree, is blooming in Israel and we will eat almonds with their hard shells and tasty insides.

Please join me in reciting the blessing over the fruit of the tree:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ
Blessed are You Lord, our G-d, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

Because of their tough exterior shell, almonds remind us of the human tendency to judge others by their outward appearances. Eating something tough on the outside and accessible on the inside reminds us that

DISCUSSION: When have you judged a book by its cover only to realize that you were mistaken?

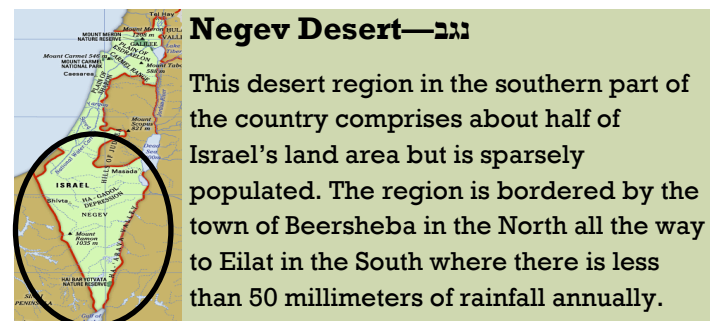
בריאה—Creation

בקעת הירדן—Jordan Rift Valley

The Jordan Valley is dominated by the Jordan River which runs for 200 miles from Mount Hermon in the North, down through the Sea of Galilee to the lowest place on Earth the Dead Sea. South of the Dead Sea.

We find ourselves in the Jordan Valley where we entered the land of Israel for the first time. On the first of Shevat, Moses began to speak to The Children of Israel. For 37 days, until the day of his death on the 7th of Adar, Moses blessed us and directed us. Then the mantle of leadership was given over to Joshua. It was Joshua who

אצילות—Proximity



נגב—Negev Desert

This desert region in the southern part of the country comprises about half of Israel's land area but is sparsely populated. The region is bordered by the town of Beersheba in the North all the way to Eilat in the South where there is less than 50 millimeters of rainfall annually.

In 1963, David Ben Gurion wrote, "The Negev is a great Zionist asset, with no substitute anywhere in the country. First of all it constitutes half the state of Israel... the Negev is a desolate area which is currently empty of people. And therein lies its importance. What it lacks is water and Jews..."

It is the world of *Atzilut*- proximity; to our Creator, to the earliest whisper of a concept. *Midbar* the word for desert, shares the same root with the word *mdaber*, to speak. We think that a desert is lonely but there, our thoughts speak to us. G-d is revealed to the people of Israel in the desert.

Rabbi Berel Wein writes:

Torah, like the water that represents it, has this enormous regenerative power. The book of Bamidbar will, in its narrative of the many sad and tragic events that befell Israel in its sojourn in the desert, constantly remind us of the powers of water/Torah to restore the Jewish people to a purposeful existence with greatly productive achievements in spite of all of its failures and backsliding.

No matter how bleak and barren the desert landscape in which we currently find ourselves, we should always be cognizant of the ability of Torah to refresh and renew us. The Jewish people are an old nation and yet our powers of rejuvenation have never waned. We were and are constantly nourished by the waters of Torah irrespective of whatever desert we found or find ourselves in.

Like water and like Torah, this first glass of grape juice is clear and full of potential. It symbolizes life before the harvest. As we start our journey in the Negev, we raise our cup to the farmer in the barrenness who decides to plant and the pioneer in the desert who helps it bloom.

Fruits and nuts with a hard outside and an edible inside

Introduction

Two thousand years ago, the 15th of the month of Shevat, or Tu B'Shevat, marked the beginning of the New Year for the trees. It was the time to calculate the agricultural tithe (1/10th of each person's harvest). Part was given to the Levites, part to the poor and part to celebrations in Jerusalem.

After the destruction of the Temple and the exile from the Land of Israel, we could no longer engage in this practice, but our appreciation for the bounty G-d gives us did not wane. Rabbi Isaac Luria, a mystic who lived in Tzfat in the 16th century, created the first Tu B'Shevat Seder.

Please read in unison from the original haggadah crafted by the Tzfat mystics:

May it be Your will, O L-rd our G-d and G-d of our ancestors, that through the sacred power of our eating fruit, which we are now eating and blessing, while reflecting on the secret of their supernal roots upon which they depend, that abundance, favor, blessing and bounty be bestowed upon them. May the angels appointed over them also be filled by the powerful abundance of their glory, may it return and cause them to grow a second time, from the beginning of the year and until its end, for bounty and blessing, for good life and peace. Let us say, Amen

By gathering together today, we recognize our unwavering support of Israel and our deep appreciation to those who have continued and inspired Jewish life whether in the exodus we read about in these weeks Torah portions, the destruction of the Temple, the mystical communities of Tzfat in the 16th Century, the hell fires of Auschwitz, the establishment of our homeland Israel, or today.

★ Our Haggadah takes us on a journey through the four geographic regions of Israel, the four spiritual realms of Kabbalah, four different categories of fruit and four special cups, together with a host of heroes and personal reflections. Please join me!

Tu B'Shevat Haggadah

January 23, 2018
7 Shevat 5778



Event Chairs: Elissa Ness and Sharon Zuckerbrod

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Conclusion

Let us reflect upon and rectify the mistake Adam and Eve made by eating from the Tree of Knowledge. Let us celebrate as if we are once again in the Garden of Eden.

Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935) Chief Rabbi of Palestine prior to the establishment of the state of Israel and great spiritual leader wrote: *Confirm me not in cages of substance or of spirit I am lovesick. I thirst, I thirst for G-d. More than the deer for water brooks. I am bound to the world, to life. All creatures are my brothers. But how can I share with them my light?*

★ Today, we have shared our light. We have travelled the regions of Israel, met some of its heroes, reflected on our own experiences and engaged in studying the Torah that sustains us. May the New Year of the Trees begin a year of growth and abundant blessing for each of us here in this room, our families and for all our people here in Baltimore, in the greater diaspora and in our homeland Israel.

Let us conclude by reciting a special blessing for the food we enjoyed today.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם על הגפן ועל פרי הגפן על העץ ועל פרי העץ ועל תנובת השדה, ועל ארץ חמדה טובה ורחבה, שרצית והנחלת לאבותינו, לאכול מפריה ולשבוע מטובה. רחם נא ה' אלקינו על ישראל עמך, ועל ירושלים עירך, ועל ציון משכן כבודך, ועל מזבחה ועל היכלך. ובנה ירושלים עיר הקדש במהרה בימינו, והעלנו לתוכה, ושמחנו בבנינה, ונאכל מפריה, ונשבוע מטובה, ונברך עליה בקדשה ובטהרה. כי אתה ה' טוב ומטיב לכל, ונודה לך על הארץ ועל פרי הגפן ועל הפרות. ברוך אתה ה', על הארץ ועל פרי הגפן ועל הפרות.

Blessed are you Lord our G-d, King of the universe, for the vine and for the fruit of the vine, and for the tree and the fruit of the tree ; for the produce of the field; for the desirable, good and ample land which thou vast pleased to give as an heritage unto our fathers, that they might eat of its fruits and be satisfied with its goodness. Have mercy, O Lord our G-d, upon Israel thy people, upon Jerusalem thy city, upon Zion the abiding place of thy glory, upon thine altar and thy temple. Rebuild Jerusalem, the holy city, speedily in our days; lead us up thither and make us rejoice in its rebuilding. May we eat of the fruits of the land, and be satisfied with its goodness, and bless thee for it in holiness and purity. For thou, O Lord, art good and beneficent unto all; and we will give thee thanks for the land, and for the fruit of the vine and the fruits. Blessed art thou, O Lord, for the land and for the fruit of the vine and the fruits.

עשייה—Action



Mediterranean Coastal Plain— מישור החוף

The coastal plain is a 115 mile long narrow strip long that is about 25 miles wide at its widest point in the South. The entire length is a sandy shoreline bordering the Mediterranean coast. Inland to the east is fertile farmland, some of which has been continually farmed since Biblical times. Haifa and Tel Aviv are the largest cities in this region.

We have now arrived in the coastal plain where some of the richest soil fertilizes the famous fruits of Israel. It is where one-third of the world's Jews live.

In the lush area of the coastal plain, we recognize abundance and we have now arrived at the world of *Asiyah*—of action.

Our cup is full of red juice which reminds us of the Pesach seder, the fullness of life, of transformation. Please join me in raising a glass to our personal, communal and national fulfillment, completeness—*shalem*, which shares the root *shalom*— when we are at peace.

★ One of the special Israeli heroes of the region is Hannah Szenesh, who made her spiritual home in Kibbutz Sdot Yam, Caesaria. It is the land of Cleopatra and Herod and the last place where Rabbi Akiva lived.

While in Caesaria, Hannah Szenesh wrote this soulful 13 word prayer called “Halicha L’Caesaria,” or “Walking to Caesaria.” Please join me in singing.

Now we will eat fruit that is entirely edible. These fruits remind us of the fullness of the world, where nothing is wasted and everything nourishes everything else. We can take this time to consider the fruit of our own creations and actions and consider how to deepen our relationships.

DISCUSSION: When do you truly feel whole and happy?

Fruits that are entirely edible

יצירה—Formation



Hill Regions of Northern and Central Israel

Mountain ranges that run the length of Israel dominate this area. The mountain ranges of the Upper and Lower Galilee in the North reaching a maximum height of 3963 feet at Mount Meron near Sefad down to the Judean Hills south of Jerusalem and the West Bank. This area is lush with vegetation nearly all year round.

This region is the source of 30% of Israel's water. It was home to the earliest Jewish settlements and includes the “way of the patriarchs,” an ancient road connecting Northern and Central Israel in the middle of the country.

This is the world of *Yitzirah*—the world of formation. We take the whisper of an idea, we grow it and now we nurture it. It is in full formation.

Now we raise a glass to the deepening and ripening of our experience. It is no longer pale or tentative, now our cup is filled with a deep rich color of the beginning of fulfillment. Let us drink with the toast of “L’Chayim!” To life!

★ An incredible story takes place in the Northern Region that demonstrates the power of one individual and the importance of trees. It is the story of Eli Cohen, Israel's most famous spy.

Now we will partake of fruit that has a large central pit. Although we cannot eat the pits of these fruits, these are the seeds, the means of their continued rebirth. These fruits remind us that every flowering tree was once bare and that the means to growth can sometimes come from the innermost overlooked places.

DISCUSSION: What is something that you have created that started very small and became bigger or more important over time?

Fruits with pits at their centers