

# Children's Tu B'Shvat Seder 2016

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On Tu B'Shvat, the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the Jewish month of Shvat, we celebrate the New Year of the Trees.

Shvat is the month when in Israel heavy rains still fall and the slopes of the hills stream with water. The heavy rains mark the end of winter and beginning of spring.

In the middle of the month, the severe rainstorms taper off and signs of spring begin to appear. The weather becomes milder and the fields begin to sprout green. Flowers of every kind and color carpets the earth.

For the Ashkenazic Jews, Jews of Central and Eastern Europe, this Jewish Arbor Day provided a welcome break in the monotony of the dreary winter months between Hanukah and Purim.

Sephardic Jews, those whose ancestors left Spain during the Inquisition and Expulsion and settled in the Ottoman Empire, call the holiday "Frutas" or Fruits. Children are given little bags embroidered with their names and filled with fruits and nuts to wear as festival pendants around their necks.

In this seder we will eat many different kinds of fruits, but we'll divide them into three groups. Some fruits need to be peeled before we eat them: their outer layer isn't good for us to eat. Other fruits have inner cores or pits that we can't eat. A third group are good all the way through; we can eat every bit.

*[Pour a glass of white juice.]* All white juice symbolizes the sleeping quiet, winter plant world

**All: The first cup of wine is the cup of responsibility. The pure white grape juice reminds us that each of us is responsible for our impact on the earth.**

First we eat fruits and nuts with a hard outside and an edible inside. Each of these foods, when peeled or shelled, hold gifts that are not seen from the outside.



Like winter, where everything lays dormant and hidden, these fruits and nuts contain inside them the potential to reveal what is hidden within.



Because of their hard exterior, these foods can represent the human tendency to judge others by their outer appearance. Eating these fruits reminds us that whoever we are, we all have unique gifts within us.

*Discuss: When have you “judged a book by its cover” only to realize that you were mistaken?*

*[Pour a glass of white juice and add a few drops of red juice.]*

**All: The Second Cup is the cup of Hope. We splash a few drops of red into our white grape juice. The little tinge of color lets us know even in the coldest days, the spring will come, and with it the rebirth of the earth. Just as each new stream begins with a trickle, each flower with a single bud.**



Next we eat the fruits with a pit. Although we discard the pits of these fruits, they are the seeds, the means to rebirth. These fruits can remind us that every flowering tree was once bare and that the means to growth can sometimes come from the innermost overlooked places. They can symbolize the potential within us that we have not tapped.



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

## All sing: Up and Down the River

Sailing up (sailing up), sailing down (sailing down)  
Up (down), down (up!) - up and down the river  
Sailing on - stopping all along the way  
The river may be dirty now but it's getting cleaner every day

People come (people come), people go (people go)  
Come (go), go (come) - up and down the river  
Sailing on - stopping all along the way  
The river may be dirty now but it's getting cleaner every day

Garbage here (garbage here), garbage there (garbage there)  
Here (there), there (here) - up and down the river  
Sailing on - stopping all along the way  
The river may be dirty now but it's getting cleaner every day

*[Refill the glass so that there is now half red and half white juice.]*

**All: The third cup of wine is the cup of diversity. It is equally mixed red and white. With this cup, we celebrate the millions and millions of kinds of living things with which we share this earth.**



Now we eat the whole fruits. These fruits can remind us of the wholeness of the world, where nothing is wasted and everything nourishes everything else. We can take this time to look at the fruit of our own actions and consider how to deepen our relationships in the world and with the earth.

### Small Seeds

Judaism teaches us to draw hope from our collective ability to shape a better world through our everyday actions. In the Talmud we see the importance of small deeds through the story of Honi.

*(Have two readers re-create this conversation. One reader pretends to dig.)*

**Honi:** Good day, old man!

**Old man (digging):** And good day to you!

**Honi:** Why are you working so hard, digging in the ground?

**Old man:** I'm planting a carob tree.

**Honi:** A carob tree?! They take many years to grow and give fruit.

**Old man:** Yes, it is true...70 years, in fact.

**Honi:** Wow! Seventy years! Do you really think that you will live long enough to enjoy its fruit?

**Old man:** Probably not. But long before I was born, my parents and grandparents planted a tree so that I could enjoy the fruit. As they planted for me, I too, am planting for my children and grandchildren.

Just as the old man planted for his children with no expectation of reward or recognition, we can also see hope in others with small, selfless actions. We can perform acts of kindness for neighbors, use encouraging words with our siblings, take care of the environment, and give tzedakah.

### **Song: Lo Yisa Goy**

*Lo yisa goy el goy kherev*

*Lo yilmedu od milkhama*

And everyone 'neath vine and fig tree  
Shall live in peace and unafraid  
And into plowshares beat their swords  
Nations shall learn war no more

*[Pour a full glass of red juice.]*

**All: The fourth cup, full red, is the symbol of strength. We have the strength and the power in ourselves to care for the earth and our fellow beings. As we drink this final cup, we dedicate ourselves to use our strength for good and not for destruction.**

May the New Year of The Trees begin a year of growth; may it be a year of renewal for the trees and for us and may we nurture the world that nurtures us.

This “Ecology Check List” includes many of the things people do to care for the earth. Read through it and discuss how we as individuals, friends and families can take care of the earth.

First, read through the list and describe how each item takes care of the earth.

Next, put a check next to all the things you already do.

Finally, put a star next to one more things your family can begin to do as a Tu B'Shvat resolution this year.

- Turn off the water while you brush your teeth**
- Separate your garbage into recycling, composting & true trash**
- Turn off lights when leaving a room**
- Take short showers**
- Use the second side of school papers and memos for scrap paper**
- When hiking and visiting parks, stay on marked trails**
- Keep your home thermostat set at 68 degrees**
- Buy fruit and vegetables from local farmers**
- Travel by bicycle and public transportation whenever possible**
- Eat less red meat**
- Plant trees in your yard or neighborhood**
- Volunteer for an environmental organization**
- Eat organic food**
- Grow some of your own fruits and vegetables**
- Buy printer paper made from 100% post-consumer waste**
- Other**

Adapted from the following resources: Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life: A Simple Tu B'Shvat Seder, Tu B'Shvat Family Seder- Hazon, Seeds of Hope: A Babaganewz Seder for Tu B'shevat, Tri-Valley Cultural Jews- Tu B'Shvat Seder