



**Tu B'Shevat Seder**  
**Temple Isaiah Sisterhood**  
**Lexington, Massachusetts**



סדר מ"ד בשבט



## Tu B'Shevat Seder



# Shehecheyanu

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה  
אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם  
שְׁהַחַיְנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ  
וְהַגִּיעַנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

Baruch Atah, Adonai, Eloheinu melech ho'olam,  
shecheyanu, v'kiyemanu, v'higyanu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are You, our God, Creator of the World,  
who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season.



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The significance of Tu B'Shevat in the days of Hillel was one of four New Years. Jewish law recognizes these four New Years showing an awareness and sensitivity to the fact that people operate in many different time cycles and rhythms. Our annual rhythms revolve around both a secular and Jewish calendar. Our personal new years start with our own birth day, anniversaries, yahrzeits, and other annual beginnings.

In Jewish law, Tu B'Shevat marked the day on which we count the years a tree has lived. For the first three years of a tree's life, we are prohibited from eating its fruit, on the fourth year we give the fruit of the tree to God or to do God's work of providing for others, and in subsequent years we can have the fruit, setting aside some of it for others.

After the destruction of the Temple and the end of agricultural tithing, the Kabbalists in Safed, Israel in the 16th century imbued Tu B'Shevat with a new significance. Through a seder, Kabbalists provide insight into the divine realm believing that nature is symbolic of the hidden divine realm. These realms, or worlds, are Nobility, Creation, Formation and Doing.

These worlds link our universe to God. Nobility is the highest world, as close to God as possible and is purely spiritual. Creation realm recognizes physical aspects and materials. Formation is the realm where materials are formed. The fourth world, the world of doing, combines all of the elements of the upper worlds to form the universe as we know and experience it. The symbols of this seder relate to these Kabbalistic worlds.

The significance of trees and nature to Jewish life was reexamined and recognized as critically important with the settling of the land of Israel at the end of the 19th century. Tu B'Shevat is a national arbor day when Israelis plant trees to commemorate the day, and Jews around the world donate money to provide trees for planting in Israel.

Today we celebrate Tu B'Shevat to remind us to work to conserve and protect the environment and to protect the earth and nature. Our Tu B'Shevat seder combines all the elements of the history of this celebration so that each participant can share and learn about their relationship to nature and their responsibilities to care for our world for the generations to come.

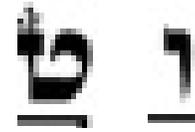




Tu b'Shevat

falls on the 15th day of Shevat.

Tu is formed from the letters tet and vav which are equivalent to  $9+6 = 15$



The structure of the Tu B'Shevat Seder is familiar to us from Passover. Like Passover, it is framed by four cups of wine, and like the Passover Seder, there are many levels of symbolism in the seder. Based on Kabbalistic (Jewish mystics') teaching, the Seder takes us on a journey through different physical and metaphysical realms and represents the base elements of earth, water, air, and fire.

As at a Passover Seder, the youngest person present asks four questions:

#### **WHY are we having a Seder in the Winter?**

On this holiday on the 15th day of Shevat, the rainy season in Israel is ending. In our community, we look forward to spring. We speak of Torah as a Tree of Life and we remember our love of Torah, our responsibility to care for the world, and the blessing to celebrate the joy and beauty of nature with thanks for all that we have.

#### **WHY do we eat different kinds of fruit?**

Fruits are eaten during the seder as symbols of our lives, our blessing, and our responsibilities.

#### **WHY do we drink four cups of wine in different shades from white to red?**

The four cups symbolize the change of seasons and in Israel, the shifting pattern of wildflowers and evoke the awakening of the earth from slumber to ripening. Each cup also represents a different realm in the understanding of the universe.

#### **WHY do we tell stories about trees?**

On this birthday of trees, Tu B'Shevat, all trees planted during this year are 1 year old. Fruit from the harvest indicate that trees have been blessed. Some laws in Torah require that we wait for trees to grow and mature before we eat of their fruit.



	עשיה	יצירה	בריאה	אצילות
Kabbalistic World	Assiya	Yetzira	Briyah	Atzilut
Meaning	Doing/Making	Formation	Creation	Nobility
Cup of Wine/Level	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Season	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
Cup of Wine	White	White/drop of red	Half red/white	Red
Element	Earth	Water	Air	Fire
Fruit/Nuts	Inedible shell	Inedible inner pit	No shell or pit eaten whole	None
Examples	Tangerine, Kiwi, Walnut, Pomegranate, Pistachio, Grapefruit, Coconut, Peanut, Almond, Orange	Peach, Avocado, Olive, Apricot, Plum, Date, Cherry, Mango	Grape, Fig, Apple, Strawberry, Raisin, Cranberry, Pear, Carob	



According to the mystical view, all trees are symbolic of Eitz Chayim, the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. Divine goodness and blessing flow into the world from the Tree of Life, and through this tree we are connected to God's creative power and life-giving energy.

The Kabbalists pictured the Divine Tree as inverted with its roots in heaven and its branches reaching down toward us on earth. This Tree of Life has ten sefirot, emanations which represent the attributes of God. Through these, creation is channeled into the world.

# עשייה

## ASSIYAH - DOING/MAKING LEVEL ONE

Assiyah means doing. Think about nature and the physical world, about actions we take to repair the world and make it whole. The earth is a symbol of Assiyah because it is permanent and solid.



Assiyah is the furthest from perfection in the Kabbalistic scheme. Symbolically, this realm requires the most protection, and therefore we eat fruits that have a hard shell on the outside - to protect them from the external elements. With this fruit and cup of wine, we have a rooted awareness of the tangible world around us, in both its natural and human dimensions. We concentrate on our place in that world.

On the table you have challah and lemon spread. After we say Hamotzi, take a bite of challah that you can dip in honey or lemon. The lemon spread traditionally is made from the fruit of the etrog that we used in our celebration of Sukkot last fall. We preserve this fruit for future use, an example to use our resources wisely as well as the cyclical nature of our world and our holidays. We preserved the etrog for use at Tu B'Shevat and on Tu B'Shevat we plant etrog trees to harvest on future Sukkots.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא  
לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Baruch, Atah, Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha'olam,  
ha'motzi lechem min ha'aretez.

Blessed is God, Ruler of the Universe,  
who brings forth bread from the earth.





## Garden Song

Chorus:

Inch by Inch, Row by Row  
 Gonna make this garden grow.  
 All you need is a rake and a hoe  
 And a piece of fertile ground.  
 Inch by Inch, Row by Row  
 Someone bless these seeds I sow.  
 Someone warm them from below  
 Til the rain comes tumbling down.

Verse:

Pullin' weeds and pickin' stones  
 Man is made of dreams and bones  
 Feel the need to grow my own  
 'Cause the time is close at hand

Grain for grain, sun and rain  
 Find my way in nature's chain  
 Tune my body and my brain  
 To the music of the land

Chorus:

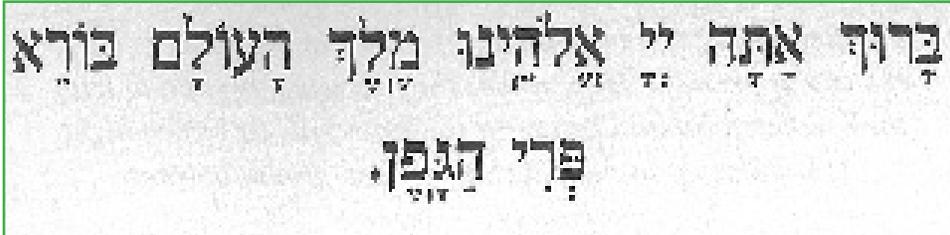
Verse:

Plant your rows straight and long  
 Temper them with prayer and song  
 Mother earth will make them strong  
 If you give her love and care

Old crow watching hungrily  
 From his perch in yonder tree  
 In my garden I'm as free  
 As that feathered thief up there

Chorus:

The first cup of wine is white, white like the snow, white like the winter while nature sleeps and the earth is quiet. Please join in saying the blessing for our first cup of wine.



Baruch, Atah, Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha'olam,  
 borei p'ri hagafen

Blessed is God, Ruler of the Universe,  
 who creates the fruit of the vine.



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Assiyah has representative fruits and nuts. We eat fruits with a hard outside shell that must be discarded and a inside that can be eaten. The part that can be eaten represents holiness, the outside serves as protection for the fragile holiness inside. In creation, each person, like God, must take action to protect what is fragile and holy.



We can be like the shell of the fruit as we protect the holy earth. Parents, teachers, and our community are the outer shell that protects holy children. When we break open the shell and see the precious food inside, we remember that we must take action to reach precious things. We must take action to know God, to share the special inner part of ourselves, and to protect the fragile parts of life and of people.

The almond has a hard shell. The word for almond in Hebrew also means to watch and to wake. It is a symbol for being steadfast, reliable, and full of hope. The almond tree is the first to flower in Israel's spring, and today it is full of blossoms and the promise of fruit to come. After saying the prayer over fruits and nuts with hard outer shells and protected inner food, please eat some to complete the blessing.

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Baruch, Atah, Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha'olam, borei p'ri ha'etz v'ha-adama.

Blessed is God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the trees and the earth.



## Hashkediya

Hashkediya porachat v'shemesh  
paz zorachat  
tziporim meirosh kol gag  
m'vasrot et bo hechag  
Tu B'Shevat higi-a Chag Ha'Ilanot  
Tu B'Shevat higi-a Chag Ha'Ilanot

The almond tree is blooming and  
a golden sun shines.  
Birds from the top of every roof,  
bring tiding of the coming festival.  
Tu B'Shevat has arrived, the Festival of Trees!  
Tu B'Shevat has arrived, the Festival of Trees!



As we celebrate Tu B'Shevat, it is important to be aware of the trees and fruits that need protection from the physical world. The protective shells that nature has provided them do not suffice to protect them from people.

Jewish tradition encourages the planting of trees, partly as an expression of concern for future generations. Even before the Jewish people entered the Land of Israel, they were told to plant trees. As it says in the Babylonian Talmud:

The Holy One, Blessed Be God, said to the people of Israel: Even though you will find the land bountiful, do not decide to sit and not sow. Rather, be very diligent in sowing. Just as you found planting done by others when you arrived, so are you to plant for future generations. Lest an old man say, "I am old now and how many years do I have ahead of me? Why am I toiling so hard for the benefit of other?" For this reason, people should not be lazy in sowing. Just as he found growth, so shall he continue the chain of life for the future. *Midrash Tanchuma, Kedoshim*



## READINGS



# יְצִירָה

## YETZIRAH - FORMATION LEVEL TWO

Yetzirah means formation. Think about energy and feelings, creation and creativity. Water (mayim) is a symbol of Yetzirah because water moves, cleans and dissolves.



The world of yetzira deals with the value of planting trees.

One day Choni the Circle Drawer was journeying on the road and he saw a man planting a carob tree; he asked him, “How long does it take for this tree to bear fruit?” The man replied, “Seventy years.” Choni asked, “Are you certain that you will live another seventy years?” The man replied, “I found carob trees in the world bearing fruit as my forefathers planted these for me, so I too plant these for my children.”

A common Tu B'Shevat activity is to have a tree drive for Israel. Trees can be purchased to be planted in one of the Jewish National Forests in Israel. Planting trees was seen as a necessary ritual in order to connect to the land of Israel. Trees were essential symbols for the Zionist mission of “striking roots” in the Jewish homeland. In keeping with the notion of planting trees to support the legacy expressed in the Midrash, it became a common practice to plant trees in memory of loved ones. Forests planted in memory of those who have died establish their legacy and serve as an effective continuity between the past and the future.

The first Tu B'Shevat Tree Planting Ceremony took place in moshav Yisud Hama'aloh in 1884. Hundreds of trees, including 700 etrog trees, were planted. In 1908, Tu B'Shevat was established as the official Tree Planting Holiday by the Teachers' Union. School children from Jewish schools in Jaffa went to the nearby Mikveh Yisrael agricultural school to plant trees. The first trees in their new home, which was to become Tel Aviv, were planted in 1910.



Pour a drop of red wine into your remaining white wine. The earth is waking and beginning to have color. The pink reminds us of spring flowers.

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;  
The flowers appear on the earth; and the time of singing has come,  
and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;  
The fig tree puts forth her green figs and the vines in blossom give forth  
fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

*Song of Songs 2:11:13*



בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא  
פְּרֵי הַגַּפֵּן.

Baruch, Atah, Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha'olam,  
borei p'ri hagafen

Blessed is God, Ruler of the Universe,  
who creates the fruit of the vine.

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## READINGS





## Kumi Lach

Kumi Lach, Kumi Lach  
 Rayati yafati, Kumi Lach  
 Kumi Lach, Kumi Lach  
 Rayati yafati, Kumi Lach  
 Ki hinei yafati, Kumi Lach  
 Hageshem chalaf halach lo.  
 Ki hinei yafati, Kumi Lach  
 Hageshem chalaf halach lo.  
 Kumi Lach, Kumi Lach  
 Rayati yafati, Kumi Lach  
 Kumi Lach, Kumi Lach  
 Rayati yafati, Kumi Lach

The second kind of fruit we eat has an edible outside and an inner pit. The inner pit is the seed that is the future of all fruit. There are seeds of life inside all of us. We are called on to be fruitful and multiply. We do this not only by having children, but through all we create; our children, our art, our music, our dance, our love, and our acts of love and kindness. These creations are not protected by an outer shell. They are exposed and vulnerable.

We cannot always protect and guard the fruit of our lives, we must express our spirit even if we risk loss. Because, really there is nothing we can do to keep everything we love safe and secure. We will live and we will die and we understand that life is fragile and sacred.

### Ba'al Tashchit - Do Not Destroy

This commandment concerning trees in wartime is the source for the law, Ba'al Tashchit, Do not destroy:

When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city? Only trees which you know do not yield food may be destroyed; you may cut them down for constructing siegeworks against the city that is waging war on you, until it has been reduced. *Deuteronomy 20:19-20*

You have to risk being hurt to get to know other people and to love other people. But when you take the chance you do find love and you find the spirit in yourself that lets you love yourself. If there is a bit of God in each of us, we take care of God by taking care of ourselves.

When the fruit of our lives is gone, the seed inside will produce more fruit through the lives we touch and nurture and cherish.





The pomegranate is a perfect example of fruits in Yetsirah due to its multiple references in Jewish text regarding its many seeds:

When the Children of Israel sang the song by the sea...  
Moses began to praise them: The brow behind your  
emptiness gleams like a pomegranate split open. Even the  
“empty” among you is full of mitzvot like a pomegranate.

It is said there are 613 seeds in a pomegranate to correlate to the number of mitzvot in the Torah.

After saying the prayer, please eat some dates and olives to complete the blessing.

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Baruch, Atah, Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha'olam, borei p'ri ha'etz v'ha-adama.

Blessed is God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the trees and the earth.

Telling stories about trees teaches and reminds us how important it is to plant trees to protect trees and to plan for the future. Water is like trees because we need to protect it, use it wisely, and plan for its future. Water shortages are one of Israel's biggest problems. The people of Israel need more water than the land can provide. Israel and her neighbors share the precious water that they need for their very existence.

*Fill your wine glass of with more red wine.*





## Eli Eli

Eli, Eli, Shelo yagamer l'olam;  
 Hachol v'hayam,  
 Rishrush shel ha'mayim  
 B'rak ha'shamayim,  
 T'filot ha'adam.  
 Hachol v'hayam,  
 Rishrush shel ha'mayim  
 B'rak ha'shamayim,  
 T'filot ha'adam.

O God, My God,  
 I pray that these things never end.  
 The sand and the sea  
 The rush of the waters  
 The crash of the heavens  
 The prayer of the heart  
 The sand and the sea  
 The rush of the waters  
 The crash of the heavens  
 The prayer of the heart



## Mayim

U'shavtem mayim b'sasson  
 Mi-may'nei ha'y'shuah  
 U'shavtem mayim b'sasson  
 Mi-may'nei ha'y'shuah  
 Mayim, Mayim, Mayim, Mayim  
 Hoi, mayim b'sasson  
 Mayim, Mayim, Mayim, Mayim  
 Hoi, mayim b'sasson  
 Hey, Hey, Hey, Hey  
 Mayim, Mayim, Mayim, Mayim  
 Hoi, mayim b'sasson  
 Mayim, Mayim, Mayim, Mayim  
 Hoi, mayim b'sasson!

# READINGS



# פריאה

BRIYAH - CREATION

LEVEL THREE

Briyah means creation. Think about God's creation and God's power to create. For God there are no barriers, no physical action or shell to break through, no artwork or inner spirit to release, because the spark of God's spirit flows freely. Now we prepare to eat the third kind of fruits that are entirely edible - we eat the whole thing. The parts are fully integrated; there is nothing to discard.



Think about ideas, hopes and dreams, the natural laws and patterns of nature that govern the universe. The wind is the symbol of Briyah. In Hebrew ruach means wind, breath or spirit.

In the beginning, darkness covered the face of the deep.  
Then the rushing-breath of life hovered over the waters.  
Let us breathe together.  
Let us catch our breaths from the need to make, to do.  
Let us be conscious of the Breath of Life.  
We breathe out what the trees breathe in.  
We breathe in what the trees breathe out.  
Together we breathe each other into life.  
Blessed is the One within the many.  
Blessed are the Many who make one.

Rabbi Arthur Waskow

The third cup of wine is more red, more awakened, more alive. As our cups are filled with richer wine, we remember the richness of life and how beautiful is our heritage.



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פְּרֵי הַגַּפֵּן.

Baruch, Atah, Adonai, Elohaynu Melech ha'olam,  
borei p'ri hagafen



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Blessed is God, Ruler of the Universe,  
who creates the fruit of the vine.

Joyce Kitmer rephrased the midrash Ecclesiastes Rabba 7:13:

I think that I shall never see  
A poem as lovely as a tree.  
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;  
A tree that looks at God all day  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;  
A tree that may in summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;  
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.  
Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

One of the fruits that can be eaten whole is the fig which has been a symbol of peace. We long for a time when all people will sit beneath their vines and fig trees and live in peace and unafraid, a time when we can beat our swords into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks, and nations shall never again know war.



## Lo Yisa Goi

Lo yisa goi el goi cherev  
Lo yilmedu od milchamah

The rabbis asked, “Why are the words of Torah compared to the fig tree?” and they answered, “Since all the figs do not ripen at the same time, the more one searches the tree, the more figs one finds in it. So it is with the words of Torah. The more they are studied, the more delight that is taken in them.” *Babylonian Talmud, Eruvim*

Creation is our air that is everywhere and it is the nourishment we cannot forgo for even a brief moment. The wholeness of God, like the wholeness of the fruit, is Shalom. Shalom is not only peace in our land and in this time, or peace within ourselves, but peace that comes from God.

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Blessed is God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the trees and the earth.

*After saying the prayer, please eat some figs, grapes, and apples to complete the blessing.*



## Eat the Seder Meal

*Drink remainder of wine and full your glass with pure red wine.*

*Blessing following the meal:*

בְּרִיךְ רַחֲמָנָא מַלְכָּא דְעָלְמָא מָרִיךָ דְהָאֵי פִּיטָא

B'rich rachamana malka d'alma mareih d'hai pitta.  
Blessed be the Merciful One, Sovereign of the  
universe, the owner of this bread.

You are the source of life for all that lives and your  
blessing flows through me.

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## READINGS



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# אֲצִילוּת

ATZILUT - NOBILITY  
LEVEL FOUR



Atzilut means nobility as in a noble spirit, loving kindness, power and beauty. We are reminded of those noble people for whom many of the forests are planted. Feel close to God and remember that each creature is part of just one universe. Fire is the symbol of Atzilut. Fire, aish, is the energy of life, yet it can also be destructive.

The fourth and last cup of dark red wine is The Cup of Thankfulness. As the seasons change from winter to spring, summer and fall, our cup of wine has changed from white through shades of pink to red. We drink this red wine at full strength and hope we will grow strong in body, mind, and spirit; strong like a tree with roots that reach deep - roots of family and heritage.



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Rabba bar Hannah said: “Why is Torah likened to fire?” As it is written, ‘For are my words not like fire,’ says Adonai *Jeremiah 23:29* in order to teach you that just as a fire cannot burn alone, so too the words of Torah cannot prevail in isolation.”

Why are the words of Torah like fire? A fire is built by many logs, and the words of Torah survive only through many minds. *Taanit 7a*

How can we generate the fire of Life? Through tzedakah - the path to justice- we create energy, possibility, and potential in people’s lives. Giving is our responsibility. It helps not only those who benefit from the gift, it helps us.

What are you supposed to say to a person who asks you for a donation or for help? First, whenever you can, you are supposed to say, “Yes, I can help. I will give to you.” Then, upon giving your gift, you are supposed to say, “Thank you, you have helped me perform a mitzvah, you have given me the chance to meet my responsibilities.”

Is your gift simply a coin, some money? It is more than that: The coin is like fire, making the giver and the receiver feel warm. The coin sparks life, providing food and shelter. The coin sets the spirit on fire with enthusiasm, warmth and energy. Fire creates light to see, so the giver and the receiver see each other, recognize goodness, and find each other’s similarities. If you have a coin in your pocket it simply falls to the bottom, but when you give a coin to someone in need, it becomes like fire rising up, providing light, and giving hope.

We have no fruit with this red wine. No fruit can represent this highest level of noble behavior. The perfect fruit of “the goodly tree,” the etrog, comes close. We began this Seder by eating the fruit of the etrog, remembering the trees that were planted long ago by someone else who provided us with good food to eat today, and we will plant parsley today to prepare for the coming of Passover.

There are cut lemons on your Seder plate. Please pass them, not to taste but to smell the essence of this fruit that is like the etrog. Keep this wonderful smell in your heart until we gather again to remember this birthday of trees, Tu B’Shevat.





## Turn, Turn, Turn

Chorus:

To everything, turn, turn, turn  
There is a season, turn, turn, turn  
And a time to every purpose under heaven.

A time to be born, a time to die  
A time to plant, a time to reap  
A time to kill, a time to heal  
A time to laugh, a time to weep

Chorus:

A time to build up, a time to break down  
A time to dance, a time to mourn  
A time to cast away stone  
A time to gather stones together

Chorus:

A time to love, a time to hate  
A time of war, a time of peace  
A time you may embrace  
A time to refrain from embracing

Chorus:

A time to gain, a time to lose  
A time to rend, a time to sew  
A time for love, a time for hate  
A time for peace  
I swear it's not too late.

Chorus:



We have celebrated trees and the work we take to plant, to take care of and to repair the earth and all that grows on the earth. May God bless the land and all of its trees and may God bless this community, our Temple Isaiah congregation, our Sisterhood, with beauty and with fruitfulness and with peace.

We end our Tu B'Shevat Seder. We have conducted it according to custom, according to the law. Just as we have been privileged to celebrate it this year, may we be worthy of performing it in the future as well.



## Oseh Shalom

Oseh shalom bimromav  
Hu Ya-aseh shalom aleinu  
V'al kol Yisrael  
V'im-ru Amain

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