



Seeds
of Hope:
A BABAGANewz
Seder for
Tu B'Shevat

BaBAGANewz

These pages contain the name of God; please treat them respectfully.

"Behind every blade of grass is an angel who cheers.

'Grow, grass, grow!'" ADAPTED FROM MIDRASH RABBAH 10:6

Seeds of Hope: A Seder for Tu B'Shevat

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Refer to notes on page 6 for materials and instructions.

Introduction

The Tu B'Shevat Seder is a place for everyone's voice. Take turns reading aloud and discussing.

Today we celebrate a birthday. The Mishnah proclaims the 15th day of the month of Shevat as the New Year for the Trees. New years are a time for hope and new beginnings. Two thousand years ago, Tu B'Shevat marked the beginning of a new year for calculating the agricultural *ma'asrot* (tithes, one-tenth of each person's harvest). Part of the *ma'asrot* went to the Levites. Depending on the year, part fed the poor, and part was used in a festive celebration in Jerusalem.

After the Temple was destroyed, and the Jews were exiled from Israel, we no longer gave *ma'asrot*. Still, Jews marked Tu B'Shevat by eating *shiv'at haminim*, the seven grains and fruits that are Biblically associated with *Eretz Yisrael* (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates). In 16th century Tzefat in northern Israel, Rabbi Isaac Luria, a mystic, seeded a transformation of Tu B'Shevat by developing a festive Passover-like Seder featuring teachings, wine, and the fruits of the Land of Israel. We adapt this tradition with a BABAGANEWZ Seder for classrooms and families, which takes into account that we are among the most fortunate generations in modern Jewish history, able to celebrate the nurturing of the Jewish state and of the Jewish soul.

Planting Hope: The First Cup

(Fill everyone's cup with white grape juice.)

As we begin, each of us is like a farmer looking at a barren field in winter. We will soon drink the first of four cups of grape juice. The first cup is filled with white grape juice to symbolize the wintertime field. We raise this cup in tribute





to the farmer who sees potential abundance emerging from the stark field and decides to plant. We will recite the *berakhah* together:

בְּרִיךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.

Barukh Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melekh Ha'olam, borei p'ree hagafen.

Blessed are You God our God, Ruler of the universe,
Who creates the fruit of the vine.

The Jewish people are blessed with abundant sources of hope. Our tradition teaches that four thousand years ago God established a covenant with the Jewish people and promised that we would become a great nation and a blessing for all humanity. The Jewish contributions to the advancement of civilization are many. Bolstered by a rich heritage, Jews have maintained our life-affirming values and commitment to justice throughout time, in nearly every land, and often against great adversity. We also find hope in each other, sustained by the care and solidarity of fellow Jews around the world. Our ability to see beyond the barren field and dream of a different future is a gift of our prophets and visionaries, old and new.

A Modern Dreamer

In 1898, Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, visited the small community of Motza, west of Jerusalem. Motza, surrounded by barren hills, was an oasis of olive, date, and apricot trees and grapevines. The setting sun cast an array of colors on the empty land, inspiring Herzl to ascend a nearby hill and plant a young cypress tree. After Herzl's death, young Jews would gather around Herzl's tree on his *yahrzeit* to plant other trees.

In 1917, the British and Turks fought over the land of Israel. When students arrived to plant around Herzl's tree that year, they found that the Turks had cut it down. The young Zionists collected the seed-filled cones around the remains of his tree. Later, these young idealists planted the seeds throughout the land, from the Galil to the Judean Hills. A generation later the trees from these seeds became part of the State of Israel, which was re-established after 2,000 years; the miracle of Israel is a deep source of hope for Jews worldwide.

Herzl taught: If you will it, it is no dream.

אִם תִּרְצוּ אֵין זוֹ אַגָּדָה. (*Im tirtzu ein zo agadah.*)

Sing: "Im Tirtzu"

The Power of One

Herzl stands as a giant in Jewish history, for he envisioned a Jewish state and planted hope in the Jewish people. In every generation, heroes change the world. Avraham and Sarah revolutionized religion by recognizing ethical





monotheism, the belief in one God Who demands goodness. Moshe stood up to a tyrant who had broken the spirit of our people, and then he delivered laws and values that have transformed civilizations. We can compare these giants to fruits with large seeds; their large ideas and deeds changed the world.

Discussion: Who inspires hope for you?

The First Plate of Fruit

Let's pass around our first plate of fruit. This offering consists of fruits with one large pit or seed, such as dates, olives, peaches, plums, and avocados.

We celebrate the sweet accomplishments of the giants and dreamers of the Jewish people. First we recite the *berakhah*, thanking God for the fruit of the trees as well as for God's commitment to protect and embrace us. As we eat some kinds of fruit for the first time this year, we give thanks to God Who has sustained us to reach this season to enjoy a new fruit. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook described trust in God as "the soil in which all values of life blossom."

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, בורא פרי העץ.

Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh Ha'olam, borei p'ree ha'etz.

Blessed are You God our God, Ruler of the universe,
Who creates the fruit of the tree.

Note: If the plate contains fruit that will be eaten for the first time this year, add the following blessing:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה.

Barukh Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melekh Ha'olam, she'hehiyanu v'ki'yemanu v'higi'anu lazman ha'zeh.

Blessed are You God our God, Ruler of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this season.

Small Seeds

Judaism teaches us to draw hope from our collective ability to shape a better world through our everyday actions. In the Talmud (*Ta'anit* 23a), 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 planted a tree so that I could enjoy the fruit. As they planted for me, so, too, I am planting for my children.

The Second Plate of Fruit

Just as the old man planted for his children with no expectation of reward or recognition, we can also seed 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. Each deed is like a tiny seed, destined to nurture good feelings and serve as an example for others to follow.

Let's pass the plate of fruits with many small seeds—such as carobs, figs, strawberries, kiwis, pomegranates, and bananas—to represent the small and important actions we can take every day to instill goodness and hope.

Note: Strawberries and bananas, though considered fruits, do not grow on trees. If these fruits are among those you will eat, recite the following blessing:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאָדָמָה.

Barukh Ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh Ha'olam, borei p'ree ha'adamah.

Blessed are You God our God, Ruler of the universe,
Who creates the fruit of the ground.

Our Seeds Can Inspire Hope

Notice that 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 another person.

Discussion: What small things can we do every day to insure a hopeful future for ourselves and others?

The Second Cup

We add one or two drops of red juice to our full cups of white juice to symbolize the seeds of hope that we plant today. As we raise the second cup, notice that the juice is changing color. It's a tasty reminder of the power of hope to change our lives—at school, work, and home.

(Drink the second cup.)





Partners in Hope

In Israel, Tu B'Shevat is celebrated by planting trees. Students help each other dig holes, as well as gently place, cover, and water saplings.

We all need partners, like a flower needs the sun and rain. As we pass around this bowl of “dirt” (really cookie crumbs), each of us will have the chance to plant symbolic seeds (nuts, candy, or raisins), using a spoon. When you plant, stretch your imagination upward and share your hope for the coming year: “I hope that this year...”

Then pass the dish to the next person, who will “water” your seeds with two things—chocolate syrup and words—before planting seeds of his or her own. The words should describe what he or she can do to help your hope be realized. It is a blessing to have friends and family help nurture our hopes.

(Create the dessert and enjoy it!)

Almonds

Hope doesn't come easily, even to Jews. Sometimes, tackling the hardest tasks is most rewarding, as when you work to crack the hard shell of the almond to reveal the tasty nut. In Israel, spring begins now, marked by the flowering of the almond tree (שְׁקֵדִיָּה, *shekaydiyah*). The Hebrew word for almond (שְׁקֵד, *sha'ked*) comes from the same root as שְׁקָדָן (*shakdan*), which means a diligent, hardworking person. It took a team of diligent people for us to enjoy these almonds—planting, tending, picking, shelling, packing, and shipping. Our ability to be partners with others to achieve dreams is another source of hope. Let's enjoy some שְׁקָדִים (*shekaydim*, almonds).

(Pass around the almonds.)

Sing: “Hinei Ma Tov”

הִנֵּה מַה טוֹב וּמַה נְעִים שֶׁבֵּת אֲחִים גַּם יַחַד.

Hinei ma tov u'ma na'im, shevet ahim gam yahad.

(Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity.)

The Third Cup

(Each person pours a little more red grape juice into the cup of the person to the left, so that everyone's cup is a rosy color—half white grape juice and half red grape juice.)

We now raise the third cup of grape juice, which is half white and half red; an equal partnership and blend to





remind us that we can depend upon each other and upon the Creator of the Universe.

(Drink the third cup.)

Spreading Hope

God created every plant with a strategy for scattering its seeds. From Tzefat, the Tu B'Shevat Seder spread around the world. We spread the timeless values of our people by joining Jews around the world in celebrating Tu B'Shevat, eating fruit and thinking of Israel. From our table we together affirm that the story of the Jewish people and of the State of Israel is a tale of hope in the process of being realized. We are proud to be bearers of hope for our generation and for humanity.



Light and Hope (except on Shabbat)

To symbolize God's presence in our lives, and to recognize that the spark of hope lives within each of us, we light two candles. The first candle we kindle is for the Jewish people and the second is for the rest of the world.

(An adult lights the candles.)

Discussion: What is your blessing of hope for the Jewish people and the world?

The Fourth Cup

(Fill each person's cup with red grape juice.)

As our Seder comes to a close, we prepare to drink our last cup of grape juice. This one is all red grape juice, symbolizing the fullness of life. Red is the color of spring in Israel when the red poppies and red buttercups bloom. We have witnessed the gradual transformation in our cups from white to pink to red. We have visited with the mystics in Tzefat, with Ḥoni, and with Herzl. We have learned that heroes change history and that we can work together to accomplish great things. Hope, like trees, starts out in little packages and blossoms if nurtured. Just like people.

As spring begins in Israel, we rise to sing "Hatikvah," Israel's national anthem, for our hope springs eternal.

(The words of "Hatikvah" are on the next page.)



NOTES:

1. Additional copies of this Seder may be found at www.babaganewz.com/parents. You may print the online version of the Seder for additional participants.

2. In 2004, we suggest that this Seder supplement dinner on Tu B'Shevat, which falls on Friday night, February 6. We hope you will save this Seder for use in the future.

3. For this Seder, you will need:

- a. White grape juice
- b. Red grape juice
- c. Arranged on one plate: an assortment of fruits with a single, large seed or pit. Examples: dates, olives, peaches, avocados, plums. Include a new fruit that participants will eat for the first time this year.

- d. Arranged on a second plate: an assortment of fruits with many small seeds. Examples: carobs, figs, strawberries, kiwis, pomegranates, bananas

- e. Sharp knife (for use by an adult) to cut the fruits into individual portions

- f. For each participant: clear "wine" glass, plate, spoon, napkin, and copy of the Seder

- g. Whole almonds, shelled

- h. A baking dish or large bowl filled halfway with crushed chocolate sandwich cookies or graham cracker crumbs

- i. Small dishes of raisins, nuts, and chocolate chips

- j. Chocolate syrup

- k. Two candles and candleholders, and matches (except on Shabbat)

4. You can hear many Jewish songs of hope, including "Hatikvah" (arranged and sung by Sam Glaser) and "Im Tirtzu" (written and sung by Debbie Friedman) on the BABAGANEWZ jukebox on www.babaganewz.com.

Credits:

The account about Herzl (on page 15) is adapted from *The Jewish Holidays: A Journey Through History* by Larry Domnitch (Jason Aronson, 2000).

Photos of trees: Israel GPO; Photos of fruits and wine glasses: Ina Miller Lerman; Side photos: Getty Images

Hatikvah: Israel's National Anthem

*Kol od balevav penimah
nefesh yehudi homiyah,
U'lefa'atey mizrah kadimah
Ayin le'Tziyon tzofiyah.
Od lo avdah tikvatenu,
Hatikvah bat sh'not alpayim,
Lih'yot am hofshi be'artzenu
Eretz Tziyon, Virushalayim.
Lih'yot am hofshi be'artzenu
Eretz Tziyon, Virushalayim.*

כָּל עוֹד בְּלִבְבֵנוּ
נֶפֶשׁ יְהוּדִי הוֹמִיָּה,
וּלְפָאֵתֵי מִזְרַח קְדִימָה
עֵין לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפִיָּה,
עוֹד לֹא אָבְדָה תִקְוַתֵנוּ
הַתִּקְוָה בְּתוֹת אַלְפִים,
לְהִיּוֹת עַם חֹפְשֵׁי בְּאֶרְצֵנוּ,
אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

As long as deep in the heart,
The soul of a Jew yearns,
And towards the East,
An eye looks to Zion,
Our hope is not yet lost,
The hope of two thousand years,
To be a free people in our land,
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

