THE FOUR WORLDS OF TU B'SHVAT

	FIRST WORLD	SECOND WORLD	THIRD WORLD	FOURTH WORLD
SPHERE (KABBALAH)	ASSIYAH נשיה action	YETZIRAH ליצירה formation	דריאה B'RIYAH} דריאה	,ATZILUT spirit אצילות
KAVANAH	GROUNDEDNESS DEFENSE	GROWTH CREATIVITY	OPENNESS ABUNDANCE	MYSTERY WHOLENESS
ELEMENT	EARTH	WATER	AIR	FIRE
SEASON	WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	FALL
SYMBOLIC FOODS	Inedible outside, edible inside: orange, banana, walnut, almond, pomegranate	Edible outside, inedible inside: Dates, olives, apricots, plums	Entirely edible: Blueberries, strawberries, raspberries	Only spiritual sustenance
WINE	WHITE	1/2 WHITE 1/2 RED	1/4 WHITE 3/4 RED	RED WITH A DROP OF WHITE
ASPECTS OF SELF	PHYSICAL	EMOTIONAL	INTELLECTUAL	SPIRITUAL

The Tu B'Shevat seder is traditionally ordered according to the four worlds that Jewish mystics believe make up the universe. First is the physical world of action, Assiyah, second is the emotional world of formation, Yetzirah, third is the intellectual world of thought, B'riyah, and fourth is the spiritual world, Atzilut. With all due respect to the original order, we've chosen to reverse it. For our seder, we start with the spirit, the root, and work our way to the physical world. Instead of using physical experiences, like eating fruit, to reach a spiritual state, tonight we use spiritual experiences to help us reach physical and practical action to create the world in which we want to live.

(spirit) אצילות The Root



Today is the full moon of the month of Shvat on the Jewish calendar: the New Year of the Trees. In the book of Leviticus we read that new trees should not be harvested for three years; the fruit of a four- year-old tree should be set aside as a gift to God; and the fruit of a five-year-old tree may be eaten. The Talmud established this day as the birthday of all trees to help us fulfill that commandment.

The Jewish tradition compares people, the Torah, and even God to trees. In Deuteronomy we read, "For a human being is a tree of the field" (Deut. 20:19). Proverbs depicts the Torah as "a tree of life to them that hold it fast" (Proverbs 3:17-18). And Jewish mystics visualize God as a tree, with roots in creation and branches spreading far and wide.

In this spirit, we come together tonight to honor the importance of trees in our sacred stories and our collective memory. We celebrate the importance of trees in all traditions, to all people. And as we affirm the parts of our tradition that lift up life, we reject the ways it has been used to justify violence. We reject the use of trees to displace Palestinians from their land; we condemn the destruction of olive trees; we denounce the planting of invasive species to cover destroyed villages. We reject all violence as a betrayal of our tradition and our values.

The Kabbalists created the seder of Tu BiShvat as a "tikkun" — a ritual of repair. Today, by eating the fruits and nuts of the trees with special blessings and awareness, we strive to repair our own spiritual brokenness and the brokenness of a world that is not yet as we and God most wish it to be. Amid the snow of winter, we reconnect with the world of root and leaf, arming our faith that spring will come. And we consecrate that affirmation through commitment to the work of liberation.

(adapted from Rachel Barenblatt (the Velveteen Rabbi)'s Seder Tu BiShvat)

Please enjoy a glass of red wine with a drop of white wine after saying the following brachah. אַה יִיָּ אֶלְהֵינוּ טֶכָּךְ הָעוֹכְם

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, borei pri hagofen (Ameyn) Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, Who creates fruit of the vine (Ameyn) 1. When in your war against a city you must besiege it a long time, you must not destroy its trees by forcing an ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. (Deut. 20:19-20)

2. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai used to say: If you are holding a sapling in your hands, and someone announces the Messiah's arrival, plant the sapling! After that, go meet the Messiah. (From the Midrash, Avot d'Rabbi Natan 2:31.)

3.We are told that Reb Nachman was once traveling with his Hasidim by carriage, and as it grew dark they came to an inn, where they spent the night. During the night Reb Nachman began to cry out loudly in his sleep, walking everyone up in the inn, all of whom came running to see what happened. When he awoke, the first thing Reb Nachman did was to take out a book he had brought with him. Then he closed his eyes and opened the book and pointed to a passage. And there it was written, "Cutting down a tree before its time is like killing a soul." Then Reb Nachman asked the innkeeper if the walls of that inn had been built out of saplings cut down before their time. The innkeeper admitted that this was true, but how did the rabbi know? Reb Nachman said, "All night I dreamed I was surrounded by the bodies of those who had been murdered. I was very frightened. Now I know that it was the souls of the trees that cried out to me." (Reb Nachman of Bratslav, as retold by Howard Schwartz)

4. When a tree that bears fruit is cut down, its moan goes from one end of the world to the other, yet no sound is heard. (Pirke de-R. Eliezer 34)

5. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia tree, the myrtle, and the olive tree; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane tree and the larch together, that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together... (Isaiah 41:19-20)

We ask ourselves:

How do these passages relate to each other? How are they relevant to the present?

What are positive values you have cultivated through religious or spiritual community or practice?

30 Fruits

Rabbi Chaim Vital (main disciple of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria) explained that there are 30 fruits which parallel the Ten *Sephirot* ("Divine Attributes") as they are manifested in each of the three lower of the four spiritual worlds. *Atzilut*-the World of Emanation-is too purely divine to have physical representation, or provide physical sustenance. Fruits can, however, through non-physical attributes, such as fragrance and symbolism, benefit our souls and spirits.

Pass around an etrog, some peppercorns, cloves, or other fragrant fruit, to smell after saying the following blessing:

ESROGIM [citrons] are considered to be an extremely beautiful fruit, and are of great importance at Sukkot time (see Lev 23:40 and commentaries). The esrog remains on the tree throughout the entire year, benefitting from all four seasons and unifying them.

בָּרוּדְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶדְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִינֵי בְשָׂמִים (אָמֵן)

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, borei minei v'samim (Ameyn) Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, Who creates varieties of spices (Ameyn) a poem by Jalal Al Din Al Rumi:

My heart, sit only with those who know and understand you. Sit only under a tree that is full of blossoms. In the bazaar of herbs and potions don't wander aimlessly find the shop with a potion that is sweet If you don't have a measure people will rob you in no time. You will take counterfeit coins thinking they are real. Don't fill your bowl with food from every boiling pot you see. Not every joke is humorous, so don't search for meaning where there isn't one. Not every eye can see, not every sea is full of pearls. My heart, sing the song of longing like nightingale. The sound of your voice casts a spell on every stone, on every thorn. First, lay down your head then one by one let go of all distractions. Embrace the light and let it guide you beyond the winds of desire. There you will find a spring and nourished by its waters like a tree you will bear fruit forever.

Rumi: The Hidden Music by Maryam Mafi & Azima Melita Kolin

(thought) בריאה The Seed



Colonization and Settlers

Zionism used the Jewish longing for homeland to garner support for the capitalist, imperialist work of colonizing Palestine. Many Jews find the Zionist project a manipulation of Jewish liturgy, prayer, ritual and memory of our ancestors. Though many settlers have dreams of liberation, Zionism failed as a liberation movement, dependent as it is on the colonizing and oppression of Palestinian people and land. Tonight, instead of ignoring and demonizing the longing for homeland expressed by Zionist settlers, we investigate the motivations of some Zionist Jews, and wrestle with our own involvement in oppressive systems. As U.S. Jews in Diaspora, we acknowledge that we too are settlers, complicit in the colonizing of this land. As people involved in the work of justice, we know we must listen to the voices of those dispossessed by colonization, and take the lead of Palestinian and indigenous peoples in the struggles for liberation.

Much like how Zionism distorts Judaism, Israel has used trees and tree planting to garner support and literally cover over Palestinian. This tactic, known as 'greenwashing,' has been lead by the Jewish National Fund. The JNF was created in 1901 to acquire land and property rights in Palestine and beyond for exclusive Jewish settlement. While indigenous Palestinians are barred from leasing, building on, managing or working their own land, the JNF holds the land in trust for "those of Jewish race or descendency" living anywhere in the world to "promote the interests of Jews in the prescribed region." Jews around the world were encouraged to give money to the JNF to "plant a tree for Israel." In addition to financial support, this strategy created a deep emotional connection for many Jews in Diaspora to a land they had never seen, a feeling that they themselves had planted a tree, had been part of developing the land for Jews, a part of making the dessert bloom.

Please enjoy a glass of wine, ³/₄ red, and ¹/₄ white, after saying the following brachah.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶכֶּךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַנָּפֶן (אָמֵן)

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, borei pri hagofen (Ameyn)

Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, Who creates fruit of the vine (Ameyn)

How did settlers think of themselves?

"The tree is the life-line of nature, of mother-earth . . . Those who have never planted a tree cannot feel the earth, and therefore will never know what homeland means." (from the first brochure of the Association of Jewish Foresters in Palestine, 1945)

We are engaged in a creative endeavor the like of which is not to be found in the whole history of mankind: the rebirth and rehabilitation of a people that has been uprooted and scattered to the winds. The center of our national work, the heart of our people, is here, in Palestine. Here something is beginning to flower which has greater human significance and far wider ramifications than our history-makers envisage, but it is growing in every dimension deep within, like a tree growing out of its own seed. Here, in Palestine, is the force attracting all the scattered cells of the people to unite into one living national organism. The more life in this seed, the greater its power of attraction. . . . We seek the rebirth of our national self, the manifestation of our loftiest spirit, and for that we must give our all. (A.D. Gordon, "Our Tasks Ahead," 1920)

The world of nature, which till then had been a dead and silent thing to me, opened and became alive and took me in. Neither the house nor the tent was my home, but the wild field and the stony hill. I found company in the flowers and rocks, in the trees and birds....I began to feel the life every plant and tree. Oh darling brother Dov, it's a marvelous thing to feel oneself poured into nature, part of that firm harmony. It's good to live with the sun and moon, with the trees and flowers. (Letter of Rahel Zisle-Levkovich, in *The Plough Woman: Records of the Pioneer Women of Palestine*)

Our settlers do not come here as do the colonists from the Occident to have natives do their work for them; they themselves set their shoulders to the plow and they spend their strength and their blood to make the land fruitful. But it is not only for ourselves that we desire its fertility. The Jewish farmers have begun to teach their brothers, the Arab farmers, to cultivate the land more intensively; we desire to teach them further: together with them we want to cultivate the land —to "serve it," as the Hebrew has it. The more fertile this soil becomes, the more space there will be for us and for them. We have no desire to dispossess them: we want to live with them. (Martin Buber, An Open Letter to Mahatma Gandhi (1939)

We ask ourselves:

What role do we play in colonizing this land? If our ancestors immigrated to the U.S., how are we settlers, and what does it mean to identify as a settler? How are we accountable to land we are on, and to the First Nations people?

What connections do we see in the desires and hopes of early Zionists and our own lives, families and communities? How do we talk to and engage with people expressing desires for home and land?

Fruits of Beriah are entirely edible, with no protection needed, either for its fruit or its seeds.

GRAPES can be turned into very different sorts of food (raisins) and drink (wine); so too, each Jew has the potential to be successful in some aspect of Torah and mitzvot observance and to be special in his or her own way. [See also Ps. 20:4; Hos. 9:10.]

FIGS must be picked as soon as they ripen, for they quickly go bad. Simialrly, we must be quick to do mitzvot at hand before the opportunity "spoils." [See also Songs 2:10..]

בָּרוּדְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶדְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ (אָמֵן)

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, borei pri ha'eyts (Ameyn)

Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, Who creates fruit of the tree.

The Three Cypress Trees

Transparent and frail, like the slumber of woodcutters, serene, foreshadowing things to come, the morning drizzle does not conceal these three cypresses on the slope. Their details belie their sameness, their radiance confirms it. I said: I wouldn't dare to keep looking at them, there is a beauty that takes away our daring, there are times when courage fades away. The clouds rolling high above change the form of the cypresses. The birds flying towards other skies change the resonance of the cypresses. The tiled line behind them fixes the greenness of the cypresses and there are trees whose only fruit is greenness. Yesterday, in my sudden cheerfulness, I saw their immortality. Today, in my sudden sorrow, I saw the axe.

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(formation) יצירה The Blossom

			SECOND WORLD
		SPHERE (KABBALAH)	YETZIRAH ליצירה formation
		KAVANAH	GROWTH CREATIVITY
		ELEMENT	WATER
		SEASON	SPRING
		SYMBOLIC FOODS	Edible outside, inedible inside: Dates, olives, apricots, plums
		WINE	1/2 WHITE 1/2 RED
		ASPECTS OF SELF	EMOTIONAL

Relying on our values as a foundation, we take on the responsibility for understanding our history and for engaging in the present. Sometimes that means exploring complications and nuances, and sometimes that means taking sides and taking action. As we learn about the present which Zionism has created for us, we react with emotions, such as rage, sorrow or disgust, and embrace these emotions as they motivate and humanize us. We also engage our imaginations and relationships to create cultures of solidarity and mutual aid, cultures that prioritize justice and diversity.

We take this opportunity, as we gather in fellowship with friends and comrades to say a traditional *shehekhianu*, a recognition of our gratitude that we are alive and blessed to experience the present.

בְּרוּך אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶכֶּךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהֶחֶיָנוּ וְקִיְּמָנוּ וְהַגִּיעַנוּ לַזְּמַן הַזֶּה: (אָמֵן)

Barukh atoh Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'oylam, shehekhianu, vkiyemanu, vhigianu lazman hazeh (umeyn) Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this time. (ameyn)

Please also share with each other your own new and creative blessings of gratitude, hope and imagination.

Please enjoy a glass of wine, 1/2 red, and 1/2 white, after saying the following brachah.

בַּרוּדְ אַתִּה יִיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ שֶׂכֶּדְ הָעַוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַנְּפֶן (אָמֵן)

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, borei pri hagofen (Ameyn) Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, Who creates fruit of the vine (Ameyn)

Current JNF Projects: Bedouin Village Demolitions and an Evangelical TV Forest

Today, the JNF is "making the desert bloom" once again. In 2003, they launched Blueprint Negev, an initiative to develop the Negev Desert in the south of Palestine/Israel. The core of Blueprint Negev is the building of new settlements and the expansion of existing ones. But standing in the way of Blueprint Negev are Bedouin communities, some of which are older than the state of Israel. Some 160,000 Bedouins live in the Negev, and about half of them live in "unrecognized villages". Unrecognized villages receive no municipal services from the Israeli government. Living without water, electrical, or trash-collection services, Bedouins in these villages subsist through agriculture, tending to groves, orchards and livestock.

One of these villages is Al-Arakib. Days before Tu B'Shevat this year, the Israeli police flatten Al-Arakib for the ninth time in six months. Since July 2010, when a force of 1,500 police arrived with bulldozers, helicopters, guns, tear gas, stun grenades to dismantle the 40 homes in Al-Arakib, its 300 residents have rebuilt the village after each attack. They cannot, though, replace the fruit orchards and olive trees destroyed by Israeli bulldozers. Along with the villagers' sheep, which were confiscated by the police, those trees were the livelihood of the community.

Why is Israel so intent on eradicating this village, people, sheep, trees and all? The JNF needs space to plant God-TV Forest. Named after an Evangelical Christian television network which has donated at least \$500,000 to the JNF, the plan is to make God-TV Forest like many other forests and parks in Israel/Palestine, that is, planted over ethnically cleansed villages.

Al-Arakib is an old village, and has been inhabited by Bedouins since the days of the Ottoman Empire. It was previously evacuated in 1951, only to be rebuilt by its original residents and continuously inhabited since then. Some of its residents hold land deeds predating the establishment of Israel in 1948, and the question of land ownership there is currently the subject of proceedings in the Be'er Sheva District Court. The Israeli government, though, did not wait for the court's ruling, and destroyed the village in an operation eerily reminiscent of the Nakba. The day before, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu addressed his cabinet, warning of "a situation in which a demand for national rights will be made from some quarters within Israel, for example in the Negev, should the area be left without a Jewish majority . . . and it is a real threat."

On this Tu B'shvat, we recognize and honor the struggles of people displaced by the Israeli military and the policies of the JNF. While much of our attention often falls on the Palestinians of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and refugees worldwide, let us never forget that Bedouins are now facing down bulldozers within the '48 borders. We must recognize the historical moment we're in and orient ourselves accordingly, aligning ourselves and our movements with Bedouins fighting expulsion in the Negev.

Fruits of Yetsirah have an inedible center, usually the seed, the hardest and most creative part.

OLIVES, from the time of Noah and the flood, has been a sign of hope for an enduring future, even after great destruction.

DATES are often a metaphor for the righteous (Ps. 92:13, Song 7:9), as the date tree is both lofty and fruit-bearing. Further, as the date tree is impervious to the changing winds, so too are our convictions.

בָּרוּדְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶכֶּדְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ (אָמֵן)

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, borei pri ha'eyts (Ameyn)

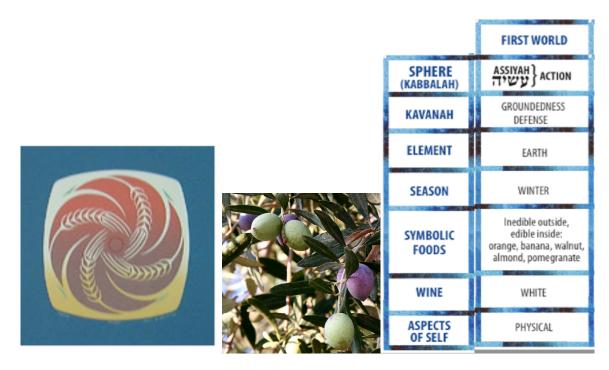
Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, Who creates fruit of the tree.

What I will

I will not dance to your war drum. I will not lend my soul nor my bones to your war drum. I will not dance to your beating. I know that beat. It is lifeless. I know intimately that skin you are hitting. It was alive once hunted stolen stretched. I will not dance to your drummed up war. I will not pop spin beak for you. I will not hate for you or even hate you. I will not kill for you. Especially I will not die for you. I will not mourn the dead with murder nor suicide. I will not side with you nor dance to bombs because everyone else is dancing. Everyone can be wrong. Life is a right not collateral or casual. I will not forget where I come from. I will craft my own drum. Gather my beloved near and our chanting will be dancing. I will not be played. I will not lend my name nor my rhythm to your beat. I will dance and resist and dance and persist and dance. This heartbeat is louder than death. Your war drum ain't louder than this breath

Suheir Hammad

(action) עשיה The Fruit



Having grounded our convictions in spirit, intellect and emotion we prepare to take action, to participate in the tikun, the repair which our world needs desparately. We claim our rights and responsibilities to engage in the world and its challenges. We need no permission from institutions, experts or leaders. Questions of justice in Israel and Palestine are often dismissed either as too complicated to understand, or in the reverse, as an act of 'exceptionalism,' as if this conflict were identical to all other nationalist conflicts. Although we can see the merit in these arguments, we will not be dismissed. We will learn about the conflict, its spiritual, historical and political origins, and the current ways people live their lives and make decisions. We will also relate our work in the justice work people pursue around the world, learn from their processes and share our own.

Please enjoy a glass of white wine, after saying the following brachah.

בָּרוּדְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ טֶּכֶּדְ הָעַוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן (אָמֵן)

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, borei pri hagofen (Ameyn) Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, Who creates fruit of the vine (Ameyn)

We ask ourselves

How does this seder and these conversations resonate with you?

What are our hopes for the future?

What strategies will help that future happen?

What challenges can you recognize?

What kind of support will help you? From whom will you find that support?

Please take some time to discuss, strategize, network and plan

The fruits which we eat to symbolize Asiyah, action, have an inedible shell, requiring us to engage in physical work to find our nourishment.

POMEGRANATES, it is said, have exactly 613 pips, equal to the number of mitzvot in the Torah. Try counting! In any case, "Even the least of Jews are as full of merit as a pomegranate is pips"-see Song 4:4, 6:7.

ALMONDS signify enthusiasm in serving G-d, for the almond tree is always the first to bloom. This is why Aaron's rod sprouted specifically almond blossoms (Num. 17:23.)

CAROBS take longer to grow than any other fruit (there is a nice story about this in Taanit 23a).

They remind us to invest our present work to future generations. בְּרוּך אַתָּה יְיָ אֶֻלֹהֵינוּ כֶּאֶֶך הָעוֹלָם (אָמֵן) בּוֹרֵא פּרִי הָעֵץ

Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam, borei pri ha'eyts (Ameyn)

Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe, Who creates fruit of the tree.

נס אָליאָוי אָל־גּוי דָרָב Lo yis'oo goy el goy cherev גוי אָל־גּוי דָרָב ילא־יִלְמְדוּן עוֹד מִלְחָמָה ע'lo yilm'doon od milchama. ע'yashvu ish tachat gaf-no, ע'tachat t'eynato, i'eyn machrir.

The fig is mentioned in the Bible sixteen times together with the vine as the most important fruit of Eretz Israel. The fig motif illustrates an era of peace and security in the past, and an ideal vision for the future.

Nation shall not take up sword against nation / they shall never again know war. / But every person shall sit under her grapevine / or fig tree with no one to disturb her.

—Micah 4:3–4

Sing together:

לאֹ־יִשָּׂא גּוֹי אֶל־גּוֹי חֶרָב Lo yisa goy el goy cherev יןלא־יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד מִלְחָמָה. v'lo yilm'du od milchama.