

## Baltimore Hebrew Congregation

### Tu B'shvat Seder 2021

#### Welcome

Shelter and sustenance; beauty and complexity; image of life and symbol of all the earth and of the Land of Israel; reminder of our obligations to care for creation and inspiration for our yearning for all that is holy. All of this is a heavy load for the both humble and grand tree.

Tonight, we gather to celebrate Tu B'shvat, the New Year of the Trees, and thus an annual celebration of life-- all life and creation. Inspired by the Sixteenth Century Kabbalistic, mystical tradition of a Tu B'shvat Seder, our own Seder will focus our attention towards **Celebrating Creation; Recognizing Ourselves; and Acknowledging the Relationship between Creation and Us**. Four cups of wine [sound familiar?], and three types of fruit will intertwine with singing, reading, and reflecting. Let us rejoice in the trees and respect the life we are granted.

#### Ya'aloz Sadai

*Lyrics: Psalm 96:12*

*Music: Navot Ben Barak & Yoel Sykes*

יַעֲלוּ שָׂדֵי, וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-בוֹ; Ya'aloz sadai, v'chol asher bo;  
אֶז יִרְנְנוּ, כָּל-עֵצֵי-יַעַר. az y'ran'nu, kol atzei ya'ar.

***Let the field exult, and all that is therein;  
then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy.***

#### The Mishnah Teaches

There are four New Year days: *the first of Nisan* is the New Year for the reckoning the reigns of kings and the feasts; *the first of Elul* is the New Year for the tithe of the cattle; *the first of Tishrei* is the New Year for the reckoning of the years and taking stock of human lives; *the first of Sh'vat* is the New Year for the fruit trees. That is according to the school of Shammai; the school of Hillel says on fifteenth, that is Tu B'shvat. (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:1)

#### Celebrating Creation

The first Kiddush begins our first section, Celebrating Creation. Taste the grapes and hear the words; but also consider the majestic and quiet experiences of creation in your life. In this year of limitation, may we remember the vast potential of the world in which we live, symbolized as well by the trees just outside our homes.

## First Kiddush

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech  
הַעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן. haolam, borei p'ri hagafen.

***Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the  
universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.***

### **The Psalmist Declares** (read down each column, not across)

Praise God, sun and moon;	fruit trees and all the cedars,
praise God, all the stars of light.	wild beasts and all the cattle,
Praise God, utmost heavens,	crawling things and winged birds,
and the waters above the heavens.	kings of earth and all the nations,
Praise Adonai from the earth,	princes and all leaders of earth,
sea monsters and all you deeps.	Young men and women alike,
Fire and hail, snow and smoke,	Elders together with youth
storm winds that perform God's command,	Let them praise Adonai's name.
the mountains and all the hills,	

(Psalm 148:2-3,7-13 (Robert Alter translation, adapted))

### **Fruit with Inedible Pit**

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech  
הַעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֵיץ. haolam, borei p'ri ha-aitz.

***Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the  
universe, Creator of the fruit of the tree.***

### Excerpt from T'filat Geshem

*Lyrics: Sh'mini Atzeret Liturgy*

*Music: Meir Finkelstein*

<p>זְכוֹר אָב נִמְשַׁח אַחֲרֶיךָ כַּמַּיִם,          בְּרַכְתּוֹ כְּעֵץ שָׁתוּל עַל פְּלֵי מַיִם,          גָּנַנְתּוֹ הִצַּלְתּוֹ מֵאֵשׁ וּמִמַּיִם,          דְּרַשְׁתּוֹ בְּזֶרְעוֹ עַל כָּל-מַיִם.</p>	<p>Z'chor av nimshach acharecha kamayim,          Beirachto k'eitz shatul al palgei mayim,          G'nanto hitzalto mei-eish umimayim,          D'rashto b'zoro al kol-mayim.</p>
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***Remember Abraham, his heart poured out to You like water.***

***You blessed him, as a tree planted near water;***

***You saved him when he went through fire and water.***

***For Abrahams's sake, do not withhold water.***

### Recognizing Ourselves

The second cup focuses our attention not on the outer world, but inward to Recognizing Ourselves and our humanity. For just a second, let us ponder how we are part of creation and how our own lives are worthy of celebrating and of developing. Just as the Torah is called a Tree of Life, so may we learn to value our own place amidst all other living things.

### Second Kiddush

<p>בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ          הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן.</p>	<p>Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech          haolam, borei p'ri hagafen.</p>
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***Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the  
 universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.***

### A Poet Encourages

It is not you alone who pray, or we, or those others; all things pray, and all things pour forth their souls. The heavens pray, the earth prays, every creature and every living thing. In all life, there is longing. Creation is itself but a longing, a kind of prayer to the Almighty. What are the clouds, the rising and the setting of the sun, the soft radiance of the moon and the gentleness of the night? What are the flashes of the human mind and the storms of the human heart? They are all prayers-- the outpouring of boundless longing for God. (Micah Joseph Berdichevski)

## Fruit with Inedible Outside

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ     Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech  
הַעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.     haolam, borei p'ri ha-aitz.

***Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the  
universe, Creator of the fruit of the tree.***

## Ya'aloz Sadai

*Lyrics: Psalm 96:12*

*Music: Navot Ben Barak & Yoel Sykes*

יַעֲלוּ שָׂדֵי, וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-בוֹ;     Ya'aloz sadai, v'chol asher bo;  
אִז יִרְנְנוּ, כָּל-עֵצֵי-יַעַר.     az y'ran'nu, kol atzei ya'ar.

***Let the field exult, and all that is therein;  
then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy.***

## Acknowledging the Relationship between Creation and Us

Our third kiddush combines our prior two, as we now are Acknowledging the Relationship between Creation and Us. These connections range from our dependence on trees and nature to our responsibility to care for the same. As we consider these relationships, we know that in some ways we are dependent and in other ways, all of this planet is dependent upon our species. Hundreds of years ago, our ancestors couldn't have imagined how the stakes of this inter-relationship would develop. Yet aware of the challenges, we celebrate the possibilities.

### Third Kiddush

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ     Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech  
הַעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן.     haolam, borei p'ri hagafen.

***Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the  
universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.***

### A Midrash Reminds

When the Holy Blessed One created the original humans, God took them around to all the trees in the Garden of Eden and said to it, "Observe how lovely and excellent my creations are, and everything that I created, I created for your sake; take heed not to damage or destroy My world, for if you do, there will be no one to repair it for you.

## Completely Edible Fruit

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech  
הַעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ. haolam, borei p'ri ha-aitz.

***Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the  
universe, Creator of the fruit of the tree.***

## Silent Reflection Demands

May we ponder the words we have sung and said. May we embrace who we are and who we hope to be. On this Tu B'shvat, we celebrate creation itself and our relationship with creation. We thrive amidst creation and yet know better than to think that all creation exists only for our sake. In this year especially, we are reminded that we cannot take nature or science for granted. So we pause for a moment of silent reflection considering this holiday, this moment, life's challenges and its potential. We pray silently.

## Tzadik Katamar

***Lyrics: Psalm 92:13-16 & Music: Louis Lewandowski***

צַדִּיק כַּתְּמָר יִפְרֹחַ	Tzaddik katamar yifrach
כְּאֶרֶז בְּלְבָנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה.	k'erez baL'vanon yisgeh.
שְׁתוּלִים בְּבַיִת יי,	Sh'tulim b'veit Adonai,
בְּחֲצֵרוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ.	b'chatzrot Eloheinu yafrichu.
עוֹד יִנּוּבּוֹן בְּשֵׁיבָה,	Od y'nuvun b'seivah,
דְּשֵׁינִים וְרַעֲנָנִים יִהְיוּ.	d'sheinim v'raananim yih'yu.
לְהַגִּיד כִּי יָשָׁר יי,	L'hagid ki yashar Adonai,
צוּרֵי וְלֹא-עוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ.	tzuri v'lo avlatah bo.

***The righteous bloom like a date-palm; they thrive like a cedar in Lebanon;  
planted in the house of Adonai, they flourish in the courts of our God.  
In old age they still produce fruit; they are full of sap and freshness,  
attesting that Adonai is upright, my Rock, in whom there is no wrong.***

## Concluding

Our fourth cup does not pair with a fruit this evening. Here in the midst of winter, Jewish tradition encourages us to look towards a time of rebirth and potential. Simultaneously, at a dark and cold time of year, our heritage reminds us to value Creation in itself. Our ancestors taught us to focus on the trees for themes spoken and unspoken this evening. In search of holiness and mindful of responsibility, we raise our cups one more time.

## Fourth Kiddush

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ  
הַעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן. Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech  
haolam, borei p'ri hagafen.

***Praise to You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the  
universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.***

## Another Midrash Reminds

A woman was traveling across a desert. She was hungry, weary, and thirsty. She found a tree whose fruits were sweet, its shade pleasant, with a stream of water flowing beneath it. She ate of its fruit, drank from the water, and rested under its shade. When she was ready to continue her journey, she said, "Tree, O Tree with what shall I bless you? Shall I say to you, 'May your fruits be sweet?' They are already sweet. That your shade be pleasant? It is already pleasant. That a stream of water may flow beneath you? But a stream of cool water flows already beneath you. Therefore, I say, may it be God's will that all the shoots taken from you will be like you."

**Hashkeidiyah Porachat****Lyrics: Yisrael Dushman & Music: Menashe Ravina**

השְׁקִידָה פּוֹרַחַת וְשֶׁמֶשׁ פָּז זוֹרַחַת	Hashkeidiyah porachat v'shemesh paz zorachat tziporim
צִפּוֹרִים מְרֹאֵשׁ כָּל גַּג	meirosh kol gag
מִבְּשָׂרוֹת אֶת בֵּא הַחֵג	m'vasrot et bo hechag
ט"ו בְּשִׁבַּט הַגִּיעַ חַג הָאֵילָנוֹת	Tu BiSh'vat higi-a Chag Ha-Ilanot
נִטַּע כָּל הָר וְגִבַּע מִדָּן וְעַד בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע	Nita kol har v'geva miDan v'ad B'eir Sheva
וְאַרְצֵנוּ שׁוּב נִירָשׁ	v'artzeinu shuv nirash
אֶרֶץ זַיִת, חֶלֶב וּדְבַשׁ.	eret zayit, chalav ud'vash.
ט"ו בְּשִׁבַּט הַגִּיעַ, חַג הָאֵילָנוֹת	Tu BiSh'vat higi-a, Chag Ha-Ilanot

***The almond tree is blooming and a golden sun shines.***

***Birds, from the top of every roof, bring tidings of the coming of the festival.***

***Tu BiSh'vat has arrived, the Festival of Trees.***

***We will plant every mountain and hill from Dan to Be'er Sheva.***

***We will once again inherit our land, a land of olives, milk, and honey.***

***Tu BiSh'vat has arrived, the Festival of Trees.***

**A Departing Thought**

But

whether trees praise God

with the light of white petals--

This I don't know.

I don't know when they cry,

I don't know when they laugh,

I know nothing about such things.

(Malka Heifetz Tussman from "I Know Nothing")