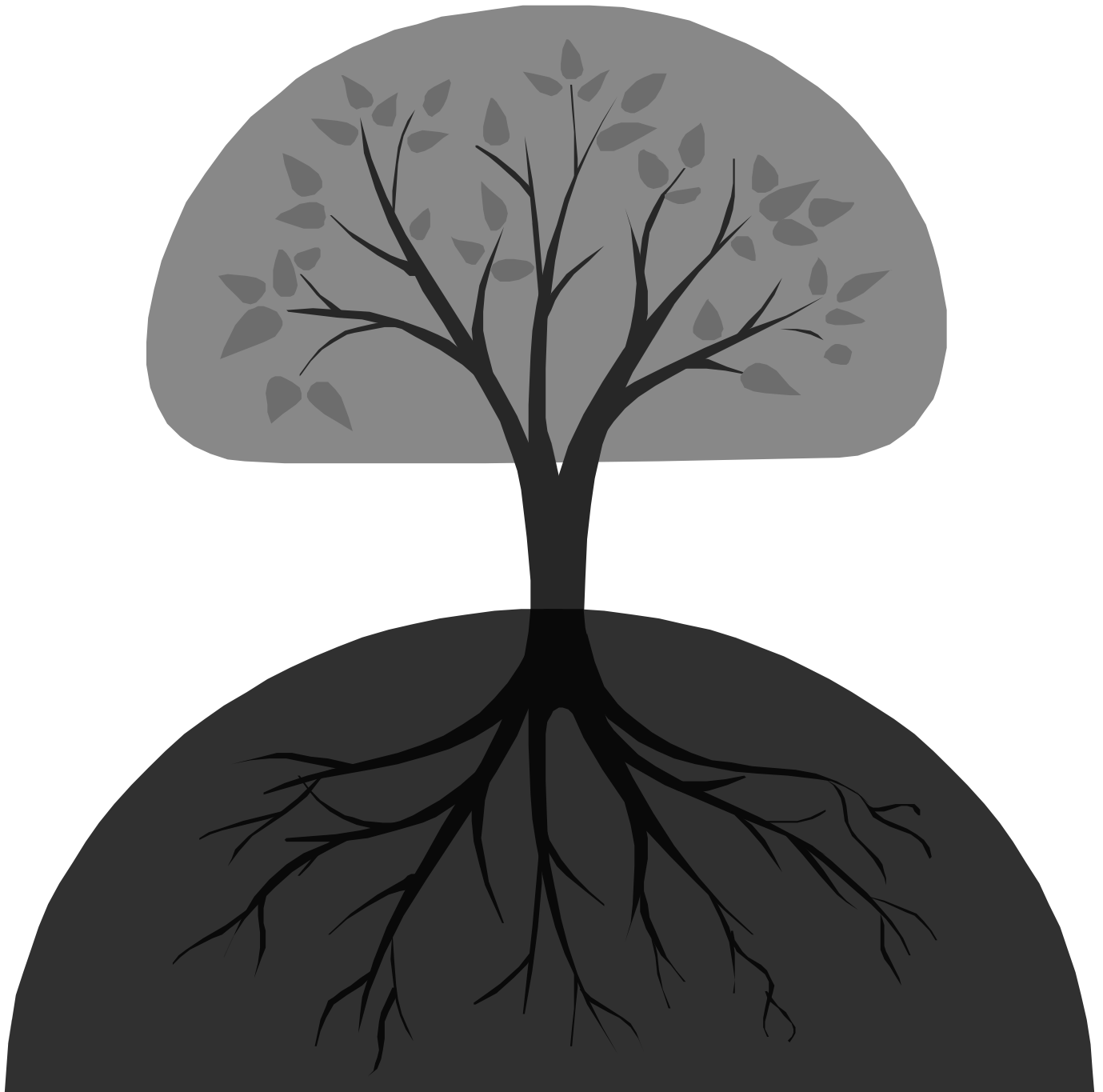


Tu B'Shevat Seder



Congregation Or Ami
Religious School

TU B'SHEVAT - a basic introduction

“Tu” means 15, and Tu B’Shevat means the 15th day of the month of Shevat, which is the full moon falling two months before the full moon of Passover (or three months in a leap year). This festival is known as **the New Year of the Trees or the Birthday of the Trees**.

This time of year is the beginning of spring in the Middle East when the sap in the trees is beginning to rise and the almond blossoms form. It’s traditional to eat fruits from Israel on Tu B’Shevat: figs, dates, grapes, olives, pomegranates. It’s also traditional to eat fruits you haven’t tasted in a long time (or ever), and to say the *Shehechyanu* (a prayer for experiencing something new.)

While the holiday has changed over the centuries, today in many places, it is seen as a time to celebrate the natural world and celebrate our relationship to the Earth.

In the 16th century, the Kabbalists, the Jewish mystics, created the first Tu BiShvat seder with prayers, readings, wine and fruits. For the Kabbalists, Tu BiShvat was not just a celebration of fruit trees, but also a celebration of the Etz Hayim, the Tree of Life.

Like the Passover seder, this seder uses experiential learning, **four cups of wine**, and special foods. Each cup of wine represents different aspects of the fruit tree and of ourselves. As the seder progresses, we change the color of the wine in the cups (like the changing of the seasons) - from the whiteness of winter to the fullness of spring. The color gets more and more red and we look forward to the fully red wine of the Passover seder.

Of course, there are many interpretations and ways to find meaning in a Tu BiShvat seder. The cups can represent the tree’s growth from seed to sapling, to continued growth, and to bearing fruit. Or they can symbolize the kinds of relationships we can have with Nature and with each other, even with God. For the Kabbalists the four cups represent the four levels of being from the most physical to the most spiritual. They can also represent the four directions, the four seasons, the four elements — all are possible interpretations.

The traditional Tu BiShvat seder also includes a special order for eating **different kinds of fruits**, each kind representing a different way that trees give to us, as well as representing our own spiritual growth. Before eating each kind of fruit, one thing some people do is to ask themselves or each other a spiritual question related to that kind of fruit. Our seder follows that model.

However you celebrate Tu BiShvat, this holiday is an opportunity to savor and appreciate the bounty of this world, and to give thanks for all the ways that trees provide us with food, shelter, beauty, air, and valuable life lessons.

This haggadah, edited by Rabbis Gideon Estes and Daniel Aronson, is an adaptation of a haggadah edited by Rabbi David Seidenberg (neohasid.org). It draws from the following: *Trees, Creation, and Creativity: A Hillel Tu BiSh’vat Seder* (Publication by the Hillel Foundation); *The Trees Are Davening: A Tu BiSh’vat Haggadah Celebrating Our Kinship with the Trees and the Earth*, Dr. Barak Gale and Dr. Ami Goodman; *Seder Tu Bishvat* (COEJL); *The Festival of Trees*, Adam Fisher (CCAR); *Kesher: Berkeley’s Reform Chavurah Tu B’Shevat Seder*. Janet Kaplan Bucciarelli of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation edited the original introduction in Rabbi Seidenberg’s haggadah. Rabbis Estes and Aronson have included songs and readings from *The Festival of Trees*, Adam Fisher (CCAR).

Welcome

The Tu B'Shevat seder is a celebration of our relationship with nature and with fruit trees, in particular, and is a time for reflection. Today, as we celebrate together, let us envision ourselves as partners in shaping, cultivating, and healing the natural world.

In the Land of Israel
spring is almost here.
Flowers begin to dot the fields,
almond trees begin to blossom.
Heavy winter rains are over,
lighter showers fall;
sap begins to rise in trees.

*Jews there and here and everywhere
celebrate Tu BiShevat, the new year for trees.
We thank God for the renewal of life,
for the blessings of branch and bud.*

Hinei Ma Tov

הִנֵּה מַה־טוֹב וּמַה־נָּעִים
שֶׁכֶּת אַחִים גַּם־יָחַד.
Hi-nei ma tov u-ma na-im
she-vet a-chim gam ya-chad.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for people to be together.



Blessing for Creation

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, עֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה בְּרָאשִׁית.

Ba-ruch a-ta, A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu, me-lech ha-o-lam, o-seh ma-a-sei ve-rei-shit.

We Praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who made our beautiful, wonderful world.

First Cup/First Fruit

First Cup - The World of Asiyah (Actualization)
Fruits and nuts with a hard outside and an edible inside

[Pour a glass of white juice, and wait for the blessing.]

We begin with a cup filled with white wine or juice. This cup reminds us of winter when much of the natural world is at rest. Winter is a time full of potential, a time of waiting for new life to emerge in coming months.

Story: The Wagon Driver's Blessing

Rabbi Wolf Zitomirer was an innkeeper in a village. A Jewish wagon driver entered and asked for a glass of wine. When he was about to drink it without saying a blessing, the Rabbi stopped him and said, "Do you realize all that God had to do so that the grapes would grow and people could make wine?" The man then said the blessing, and the Rabbi answered, "Amen!"

(Attributed to *Me-orot HaGedolim*)

[Say the blessing, and drink half or more.]

Blessing For The Juice

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Blessed be You, the One who creates the fruit of the vine.

To symbolize this level, we eat fruits with peels or shells. Although seemingly inedible from the outside, each of the foods eaten at this first level of God's presence in the world, when peeled or shelled, hold gifts that transcend their outward appearance. Like winter, where everything lies 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. They can also represent the ways we separate ourselves from other people. Eating these fruits reminds us that whoever we are, we all carry a divine spark within.

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

The First to Awaken

The almond tree is the first tree to greet Tu BiShevat. In Israel it is the first to awaken out of its winter sleep. By Tu BiShevat it is already full of flowers.

Hashekeidiya

הַשְּׁקֵדִיָּה פּוֹרְחָת
וְשֶׁמֶשׁ פָּז זוֹרְחָת.
צִפּוֹרִים מֵרֹאשׁ כָּל גַּג
מְבַשֵּׁי רוֹת אֶת בֵּא הַחָג.
טו בְּשֶׁבֶט הַגִּיעַ חַג הָאֱלָנוֹת

Ha-she-kei-di-ya po-ra-chat,
ve-she-mesh paz zo-ra-chat.
Tsi-po-rim mei-rosh kol gag,
me-va-se-rot et bo he-chag.
Tu Bi-Shevat hi-gi-a, chag ha-il-a-not. (2x)

The almond tree is blooming
'neath the golden sun.
Birds sing from every roof
telling us the time has come.
Tu BiShevat has come, the holiday of trees.

Israel and Walnuts

Rabbi Tarfon said that the people of Israel are like a pile of walnuts. If one walnut is removed, each and every walnut in the pile will move.

When a single Jew is in trouble, every other Jew feels the trouble too.
(Avot DeRabbi Natan 18.1)

Blessing For Fruit

[Say this before eating each kind of fruit.]

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-aytz.

Blessed be You, the One who creates the fruit of the tree.

Blessing For The First Time You Experience Something (Shehechyanu)

[Say this before any fruit you are tasting for the first time this season.]

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
שֶׁהַחַיָּנוּ וְקִיּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמַן הַזֶּה.

*Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melek ha-olam,
she-hechyanu v'kiy'manu v'higi'anu la-z'man ha-zeh.*

Blessed be You, the One
who has kept us alive and sustained us so that we could reach this moment.



Second Cup/Second Fruit

**Second Cup - The World of Yetzirah (Formation)
Fruits with pits at their center**

[Add a few drops of red juice and fill the rest with white. Wait for the blessing.]

We are about to drink our second cup of juice. Just as each new stream begins with a trickle, each flower with a single bud, just a few drops of color transform the hue of our juice. This pink juice reminds us that pink flowers are now starting to grow in the Land of Israel.

Erets Zavav Chalav

אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלָב
חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ

E-rets za-vat cha-lav

cha-lav u-de-vash. (4x)

אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלָב
זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבַשׁ

E-rets za-vat cha-lav

za-vat cha-lav u-de-vash. (2x)

"...a land flowing with milk and honey."

(Deuteronomy 11.9)



[Say the blessing, and drink half or more.]

Blessing For The Juice

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Blessed be You, the One who creates the fruit of the vine.

We now eat fruits with a hard pit at their core. 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?

Israel Is Like a Date Palm

The date palm tree (*tamar*) is a very important tree, because every part of it can be used, every part is needed.

So it is with Israel: each community, each person, each child is important; every one is needed.

(Numbers Rabba 3.1)

Tsadik Katamar

Tsa-dik ka-ta-mar yif-rach,
ke-e-rets ba-Le-va-non yis-geh.
She-tu-lim be-veit A-do-nai,
be-chats-rot E-lo-hei-nu yaf-ri-chu.
Od ye-nu-vun be-sei-va,
de-shei-nim ve-ra-a-na-nim yih-yu,
le-ha-gid ki ya-shar A-do-nai,
tsu-ri ve-lo av-la-ta bo.

צָדִיק כְּתָמָר יִפְרַח
כְּאַרְז בְּלְבָנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה:
שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית יְהוָה
בְּחִצְרוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ:
עוֹד יִנּוּבוּן בְּשֵׁבָה
דְּשֵׁנִים וְרַעֲנָנִים יִהְיוּ:
לְהַגִּיד כִּי־יָשָׁר יְהוָה
צוּרִי וְלֹא־עוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ:

Those who are just and fair shall bloom like a date palm;
they shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon;
planted in the house of the Holy One,
they will be close to God.

(From Psalm 92)

Olive Tree

Hope for All

The olive tree was always a sign of hope. Long, long ago, there was a great flood. Water covered most of the world. Noah brought animals onto his ark to save them. When the rain stopped, Noah sent out a dove to see if there was any dry land. "The dove came back to him toward evening, and there in its bill was a leaf it had picked from an olive tree!"

(Genesis 8.11)

Then Noah and his family knew that they would soon be able to leave the ark.

Atsei Zeitim

עֲצֵי זֵתִים עומדים.

A-tsei zei-tim om-dim.

Olive trees are standing.

Blessing For Fruit

[Say this before eating each kind of fruit.]

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-aytz.

Blessed be You, the One who creates the fruit of the tree.





TORAH — THE TREE OF LIFE

We celebrate the flowering
of Israel's land and people.

*We celebrate trees
which convey a sense of long life.*

*We celebrate trees
which nourish our bodies with fruit
and our spirits with beauty.*

The menorah, the symbol of Jewish life,
was patterned after the olive tree
which lives for five hundred or even
two thousand years.

We celebrate trees, the symbol
of Torah,
called the "Tree of Life."
It nourishes our souls
and enlightens our minds.

*Torah, which is so ancient yet lives today,
is our "Tree of Life."*

Torah continues to support and
sustain and renew our lives.

Eits Chayim

עץ-חיים היא למחזיקים בה,
ותמכה מאשר.
דרךיה דרכי-נעם,
וכל-נתיבותיה שלום.

It is a tree of life to those who grasp it,
and whoever holds on to it is happy.
Its ways are pleasant ways,
and all its paths, peaceful.

Eits cha-yim hi la-ma-cha-zi-kim ba,
ve-to-me-che-ha me-u-shar.
De-ra-che-ha dar-chei no-am,
ve-chol ne-ti-vo-te-ha sha-lom.

(Proverbs 3.17-18)



Third Cup - The World of Beriah (Creation) Fruits that are entirely edible

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

We are about to drink our third cup of juice. We now have half a cup of red juice and half a cup of white - even though the trees will be full and green and their flowers will blossom, their growth is not complete. So much more will be created; so much more is to come.

In the Land of Israel, the first spring fruits ripen - strawberries, melons and apricots; red poppies and tulips cover the ground like a blanket, brightening the countryside.

[Recite the blessing, and drink half or more.]

Blessing For The Juice

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.
Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Blessed be You, the One who creates the fruit of the vine.

The fruits we now eat are entirely edible, inside and out. They 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 creations and actions and consider how to deepen our relationships in the world and with the earth.

Discuss: When do you feel truly whole and happy?

Figs

Symbols of Peace

The Bible speaks of the fig tree in a time of peace when "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not take up sword against nation; they shall never again know war.

But all shall sit
under their grapevine or fig tree
with no one to disturb them."

(Micah 4.3-4)

Lo Yisa Goi

לֹא יִשָּׂא גּוֹי אֶל גּוֹי חֶרֶב,
לֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד מִלְחָמָה.

Lo yi-sa goi el goi che-rev,
lo yil-me-du od mil-cha-ma.

Nation shall not take up
sword against nation;
they shall never again know war.

(Micah 4.3)

Carob

The carob has a special place in Jewish life because during the war with Rome, our people lived under a siege and managed to survive by eating the fruit of the carob tree.

The Hebrew words for carob (*charuv*), sword (*cherev*), and destruction (*churban*) are all similar. They remind us of the war and the destruction of the Temple. The carob is even shaped like a sword.

Story: Plant for the Future

Once an old man was planting a fig tree when a Roman general happened to pass by. He laughed at the old man and said, "You Jews are stupid. Don't you realize it will take twenty years before that tree will grow enough to give fruit, and you will be long dead by then?"

The old man answered, "When I was a small child I could eat fruit because those who came before me planted trees. Shouldn't I do the same thing for the children who come after me?"

The general said, "If you live long enough to eat figs from this tree, let me know." In a few years the trees produced figs, and the old man lived long enough to enjoy them. He filled a basket and brought them to the general who honored him.

The general's servants were surprised that he would show honor to a Jew, but the general told them, "His Creator honors him with long life and beautiful trees. I should honor him too."

(Leviticus Rabba 25.5)

Blessing For Fruit

[Say this before eating each kind of fruit.]

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-aytz.

Blessed be You, the One who creates the fruit of the tree.



Fourth Cup - The World of Atzilut (Presence, Emanation, Birth)

[Pour a nearly full glass of red juice again and add just a few drops of white. Wait for the blessing.]

We now come to our final cup; the drops of white in the red remind us of the first cup of this seder and of the cyclical nature of the seasons.

In summer the flowers are in full bloom, field and tree give their fruit. We drink this darkest-red cup of juice with thanks for the richness of God's land.

[Recite the blessing, and drink half or more.]

Blessing For The Juice

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגֶּפֶן.
Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei p'ri ha-gafen.

Blessed be You, the One who creates the fruit of the vine.

This final section represents what is invisible to the eye. *Instead of eating fruit, we may enjoy sweet smells like cinnamon and rosemary.* Beyond the cycle of eating is the cycle of breathing, when something lives both within and without us at the same time, when it is so much a part of us that we cannot even see it.

At this level all things are already part of each other. We all have this kind of connection with the earth and with God. Like smells, the ways we remember this connection are subtle: the feel of the soil or the smell of dew, the color of the changing leaves, the sounds of birds migrating, or the clasp of a hand.

Discuss: *What helps you remember and appreciate what you cannot see?*

Smell: Cinnamon | Rosemary | Bay Leaf | Cedar



Custodians of God's World

Story: Do Not Destroy

When God led Adam through the Garden of Eden, God told him, "I made My beautiful and glorious world for your sake. Take care not to hurt or destroy My world, for if you do, there is no one to fix it after you."

(Ecclesiastes Rabba 7)

Eili, Eili

אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ
שֶׁלֹא יִגְמַר לְעוֹלָם
הַחֹל וְהָיָה,
רִשְׁרוּשׁ שֶׁל הַמַּיִם,
בְּרַק הַשָּׁמַיִם,
תְּפִלַּת הָאָדָם.

Ei-li, Ei-li,

she-lo yi-ga-meir le-ol-am

ha-chol ve-ha-yam,

rish-rush shel ha-ma-yim,

be-rak ha-sha-ma-yim,

te-fi-lat ha-a-dam. (2x)

O God, our God,

I pray that these things never end:

The sand and the sea,

The rush of the waters,

The crash of the heavens,

The prayers of the heart. (2x)



Prayer for Your World

May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our fathers and mothers, that all fruit trees be filled with beautiful buds and blossoms.

May they be renewed each year to grow and give the fruit of goodness and sweetness.

May we all take good care of Your world.

May we enjoy and share the fruit of Your earth.





Hatikva

כָּל עוֹד בְּלִבְּךָ פְּנִימָה
נֶפֶשׁ יְהוּדֵי הוֹמִיָּה,
וּלְפָאֲתַי מִזְרַח קָדִימָה
עֵין לְצִיּוֹן צוֹפֶיָה.
עוֹד לֹא אָבְדָה תְּקִוַּתֵּנוּ,
הַתְּקֵנָה בַּת שְׁנוֹת אֲלָפִים,
לְהִיּוֹת עִם חֶפְשִׁי בְּאַרְצֵנוּ,
אֶרֶץ צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

Kol od ba-lei-vav pe-ni-ma
ne-fesh Ye-hu-di ho-mi-ya,
u-le-fa-a-tei miz-rach ka-di-ma
a-yin le-Tsi-yon tso-fi-ya,
od lo av-da tik-va-tei-nu,
ha-tik-va bat she-not al-pa-yim
(lih-yot am chof-shi be-art-sei-nu
e-rets Tsi-yon vi-Ye-ru-sha-la-yim.) 2x

So long as still within the inmost heart
a Jewish spirit sings,
so long as the eye looks eastward
toward Zion,
our hope is not lost —
that hope of two thousand years,
to be a free people in our land,
the land of Zion and Jerusalem



