



Tu'B'Shevat

It's Kabbalistic Significance & How the Seder Is Observed

*by Ariel Bar Tzadok
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The 15th day of the Hebrew month Shevat, according to Mishna Rosh HaShana, is called the "New Year" for trees. According to the Kabbalah, there is great significance to this day. Indeed an entire Seder of fruits and vegetables is prepared for the great tikkun, which this day provides.

On Rosh HaShana (Tishrei 1), all is decided. Whatever amount of sustenance that any living thing is to receive is ordained on this day. Yet, the manifestation of this Divine portion (shefa) manifests at different times of the year as arranged by the Divine plan.

The 15th of Shevat is the exact middle of the winter: six weeks after the first of Tevet (the beginning of winter) and six weeks before Nisan (the beginning of spring). (However this year is a leap year, so the 15th of Shevat falls six weeks before Adar Bet).

This day then is the day of resurrection of the plant life. During the winter months, the plant kingdom lies dormant in the frozen earth, awaiting springtime to again send forth its seeds and to blossom upon the earth. Yet, as we know, no manner of life and growth can come forth below without first receiving it's spiritual counterpart of nourishment from above.

Tu'B'Shevat, the 15th (full moon) of Shevat, is the day when the spiritual influx is given over into the plant kingdom. On this day, they receive their spiritual nourishment that enables them to awaken and properly perform their service to creation once spring arrives. Thus this day is the "New Year" for the plant kingdom (called in Hebrew, Ilanot for trees, yet is applicable to the whole plant kingdom).

In celebration of this Divine gift of sustenance and providence, we celebrate by arranging an entire Seder of fruits and vegetables. By eating these things and by reciting the appropriate blessings over them we are offering shefa (ohr hozer, mayim nokbin) to Heaven in appreciation for all that is given to us. By doing this act we thereby increase the amount of abundance (shefa) that HaShem provides to the plant kingdom. Thus by



blessing HaShem, we reap the benefit of an expanded harvest, both physically and spiritually.

There are various different minhagim as to how many fruits and vegetables should be eaten. One tradition holds that one partake of only the seven fruits of the land. The Shulkhan Arukh outlines what these are and the specific order in which their blessings are recited. This minhag, however, is only according to the pshat.

There are two other minhagim, which are based on the Kabbalah and found in many sources, most in the name of Rabbi Haim Vital.

Both involve a Seder of either 15 or 30 fruits and vegetables, which are eaten alongside of specific readings from the TaNaKh, Mishna and Zohar.

The order of these readings can be found in Sefer Pri Etz Hadar (the seder limud for Tu'B'Shevat). This text is published under its own title or available in a larger work entitled, Sefer Sedei Ya'ar.

Both of these texts should be available from the Mekor HaSefarim bookstore in Brooklyn. Their toll free number is 1-800-430-2067. They can ship anywhere in the world. Yet, those of you in Europe and Aretz might want to check out your local bookstores.

I will outline here the order of the 15 fruits and vegetables, the readings however, are obviously too detailed to outline in such a brief forum as here.

THE TU'B'SHEVAT SEDER

Sefer Nitei Gavriel on Tu'B'Shevat (page 185, note Gimel) documents in full the order of the fifteen in the name of Moharam Hagiz in his work, Birkhat Eliyahu.

The fruits and vegetables are divided in three different classes:

1. those emanating from Beriah;
2. those emanating from Yetzirah and
3. those emanating from Asiyah.

Beriatric fruits and vegetables are eaten together with their peels (klipot), which are normally considered unclean by the Kabbalists, but not at this high level. Yetziratic fruits and vegetables have their klipah inside them (the pit), which is disposed of. Asiyatic fruits and vegetables have their klipot on the outside and are removed and disposed of.

The following order of the fruits and vegetables is my interpretation of the order outlined by Rabbi Hagiz.



The five **Beriatric** fruits and vegetables are:

1. figs
2. grapes
3. red apples
4. pears
5. quinces

The five **Yetziratic** fruits and vegetables are:

1. dates
2. olives
3. berries (blueberries or any other kind)
4. cherries
5. azaroles (or crabapples)

I am not sure how crabapples fit into the Yetziratic formula. Maybe the seed core is considered its klipah. In such a case, it is possible that a green apple ("granny smith") might be used for this selection.

The five **Asiyatic** fruits and vegetables are:

1. pomegranates
2. almonds
3. hazelnuts
4. peanuts
5. walnuts

Both peanuts and walnuts are my own choices. It appears that any similar type of fruit, vegetable or nut with a hard outer shell, which is to be broken and disposed of, meets the criteria.

The eating of these tree born fruits and vegetables, with their appropriate blessings before and after, is considered a tikkun (rectification) for Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, Good and Evil.

There are five selections representing each world most likely corresponding to the five levels of soul (NaRaNHAY) that emanate from each one of them.

There are no correlations of fruits and vegetables to the world of Atzilut for two reasons. The first is that there is no klipot to speak of from there and second, the world of Atzilut is the source of the shefa (Divine influx). Atzilut is referred to as the "Creator" (i.e., the "Giver"). The lower three worlds are referred to as "Creation (i.e., the "Receivers").