

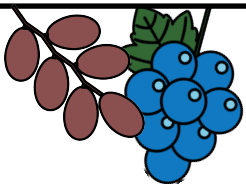
# Tu B'Shevat Seder of Gratitude

## The Seven Species

Next week, we celebrate the holiday of Tu B'Shevat, which is known as the new year for the trees. There is a kabbalistic tradition to mark this holiday with a ceremonial meal, a *Seder* (similar to the Passover Seder), in which the participants taste the various fruits of the land after making blessings and expressing gratitude for them. It's also customary to eat fruits you haven't tasted before and to say the *Shehecheyanu* blessing of gratitude when experiencing something new.

"It is the custom of some to eat 15 types of fruit on Tu B'Shevat, while others eat of the Seven Species with which the Land of Israel is blessed. It is the custom of many, however, to partake of fresh fruit, dried fruit, cooked and preserved fruits, to the number of fifty, while others partake of 100 types!"  
*(Rabbi Haim Flaji, The Appointed Festivals for All Living, 654b)*

Using the texts below, explore the seven species of the land of Israel — blessing, tasting, and reciting some traditional texts associated with these fruits. Through the prompts, uncover and express the gratitude that resonates for you. You may do this with your family or others in a group setting, taking turns with the readings.



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## Tu B'Shevat Seder of Gratitude: The Seven Species

כִּי ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ מְבִיאֲךָ אֶל-אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה אֶרֶץ נַחְלִי מֵיִם עֵינַת  
וְתַהֲמַת יִצְאִים בְּבִקְעָה וּבְהָר:  
אֶרֶץ חֲטָה וּשְׁעֵרָה וְגִפְּוֹן וְתַאֲנָה וְרִמּוֹן אֶרֶץ זֵית שֶׁמֶן וְדַבְּשׁ:  
(דברים ח, ז-ח)

“For the Lord your G-d is bringing you into a good land, a land with streams and springs and fountains issuing from plain and hill; a land of **wheat** and **barley**, of **vines**, **figs**, and **pomegranates**, a land of **olive** trees and **honey**.”

(Deuteronomy 8:7-8)

### A Kabbalistic Blessing Over Fruit

“May it be G-d's will that by the power vested in the blessing and eating of these fruits, and by contemplating the secrets of their roots, by which we will receive G-d's blessing, charity, and abundance; may G-d make them grow and prosper throughout the year for goodness and blessings, for a good life and for peace.”

(Pri Etz Hadar)



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## Wheat (or bread)

Choose a food made out of wheat and make the appropriate blessing:

The blessing over bread:

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ:**

*Baruch Atah Ado-nai, Elohai-nu Melech HaOlam, ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz.  
Blessed are you G-d, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.*

The blessing over cake/crackers/cookies:

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיְנֵי מְזוֹנוֹת:**

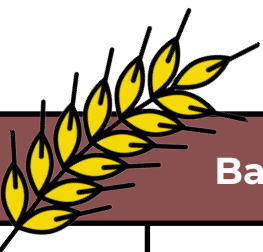
*Baruch Atah Ado-nai, Elohai-nu Melech HaOlam, boray minay mezonot.  
Blessed are you G-d, King of the Universe, Who creates species of nourishment.*

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“It is said that one who sees wheat in his dream sees peace, as it is said: ‘He grants peace to your borders and satisfies you with the finest of wheat’ (Psalms, 147:14). Rabbi Meir says that it was wheat. When a person has no knowledge, they say [in a folk saying]: ‘That man has never eaten wheat bread in his life’ (Genesis Rabbah 15:8). Rabbi Yehuda says: An infant cannot say ‘father’ and ‘mother’ until it has tasted wheat (bread). We deduce that from the moment a child eats bread, he is considered to understand. Thus wheat symbolizes knowledge itself.” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhederin, 70b)

— *What knowledge are you grateful for?*

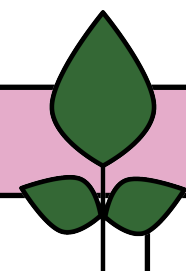




## Barley

“Rabbi Judah son of Simon commented that Boaz measured six measures of barley for Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 3:15). As his reward, Boaz was privileged to have six righteous men as descendants, namely, David, Hezekia, Josiah, Hanania, Mishael and Azaria, Daniel, and the King Messiah, David.” (Midrash Rabba, Ruth 7:2)

— *What “fruit of your labor” would you like to leave for your descendants?*



## Fruit

Say the following blessing and then eat one of the fruits:

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְרֵי הָעֵץ:**

*Baruch Ata Ado-nai, Elohei-nu Melech HaOlam, borei pri ha-etz.*

*Blessed are you G-d, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the tree.*

If there is a seasonal fruit at the table which you have not yet tasted this season, say the following additional blessing before eating the fruit:

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיְמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה:**

*Baruch Ata Ado-nai, Elohai-nu Melech HaOlam, sheh-he-che-yanu vi-kee-yimanu vi-hee-gee-yanu la-zman ha-zeh.*

*Blessed are You G-d, King of the Universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this time.*





## Olives

“The Sages taught: Just as olive oil brings light into the world, so do the people of Israel bring light into the world.” (Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabba 1:2)

— *Who are you grateful for that has brought light into your world?*



## Dates

“Why is Israel compared to the date palm? There is no waste in any part of the date palm. The dates are eaten, the lulav branches are used for the Hallel prayer, the dried branches are used for thatch, the fibres for rope, the leaves for sieves, and the planed boards for roofing. So it is with the people of Israel, that none is worthless in Israel.” (Midrash Rabba, Genesis 41:1)

— *Think of someone you’ve recently had a hard time with. What worthiness and beauty can you recognize in them?*



## Grapes

“Why is Israel compared to a grape vine? Just as when its owner seeks to improve it, he uproots it and plants it elsewhere and then indeed it flourishes, similarly, when G-d intended to make Israel's fame known throughout the world, what did He do? He uprooted them from Egypt, brought them into the wilderness, where they began to improve. They received the Torah and their reputation spread throughout the world.” (Midrash Rabba, Exodus 44:1)

— *What in your life could be uprooted and changed, in order to improve upon it?*

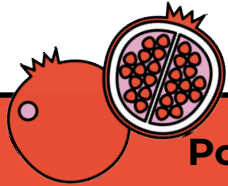




## Figs

“Rabbi Yochanan said: What is the meaning of ‘He who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit’ (Proverbs 27:18)? Why is the Torah compared to a fruit tree? Figs on a tree do not ripen all at once, but a little each day. Therefore, the longer one searches in the tree, the more figs he finds. So too with Torah: The more one studies, the more knowledge and wisdom one finds.” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Eruvin 54a)

— *Who has displayed patience and persistence with you, for which you are grateful?*



## Pomegranates

“Rabbi Meir found a pomegranate; he ate the fruit and threw away the peel. This is to teach us to differentiate between the main thing and things of secondary importance.” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Hagiga, 15b)

— *Think of something that has been troubling you. Try to discern the main thing that needs to be addressed and to “discard” the rest.*



## The Revival of the Tree

“The revival of the tree is not rooted in its branches or leaves or glorious fruit, but rather in its roots, which are strengthened in a place where winds and storms cannot reach. The roots get stronger from the source of living waters of renewal. The tree is not concerned when storms catch it, shake it, bend it — it does not move from its place, and as long as it is not uprooted, it will have a revival! Therefore, we see the tree has not lost anything; all the more so, it has renewed strength from the struggle. So is the human being. As long as a person holds on to his spiritual roots, no wind shall uproot him from his place. On the contrary, the storms will wake up the power of renewal.”

(Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Cycles of the Year, Tu B'Shvat)

— *What are your roots that are strong and keep you grounded?  
How can you express gratitude for them?*

