

THE NATIONAL JEWISH COMMITTEE ON SCOUTING

Tu B'Shvat Seder

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This booklet has been created by the National Jewish Committee on Scouting. It is designed to assist units in putting on a Havdallah service and to assist Scouts in fulfilling their religious obligations by providing them with a Havdalah Service that they can conduct at home or during a campout. Each Scout is free to adapt this material in keeping with his family and community tradition.

**Comments, Questions,
Edits**

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The 15th of Shevat – is known as the “New Year for Trees.” This is the date our sages have calculated that the earliest-blooming trees in Israel emerge from their winter sleep and start a new fruit-bearing cycle. Our Seder revolves around the four seasons, which symbolize four worlds in Jewish tradition. We start with winter. Even though we may be in a part of the world where it is still the middle of winter – after all, it is still Polar Bear badge weather here – for everything we do today we must imagine that we are in Israel, where winter is now coming to an end.

In Jewish law the “New Year for Trees” is linked to the various tithes that are separated from produce grown in Israel.

--Who knows what a tithe is?

We mark *Tu B'shvat* by eating fruit, especially those that are singled out by the Torah in its praise of the bounty of the Holy Land: Grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. Deuteronomy 8:8 holds that there are five fruits and two grains associated with Israel as a “land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and [date] honey.” Some people have the tradition of eating as many as possible of the fifteen kinds of fruits from Israel: Those are figs, almonds, walnuts, pecans, dates, olives, cherries, plums, carob, avocado, pomegranate, orange, raisins, strawberries, and grapes. Since the 13th point of the Scout Law is that a Scout is Hungry, we're going to try to have as many of those as possible today.

The *Tu B'shvat* Seder also provides a means to celebrate the change of seasons: Four cups of grape beverage are consumed – from white to red, each one redder than the one before it - symbolizing the shifting pattern of wildflowers in Israel during the year, and evoking the awakening of the earth from slumber to eventual ripening. As Scouts we learn about and participate in the Earth's changing seasons in many ways.

--Who can name some of the Scouting badges that are directly concerned with nature and the changing seasons? I can think of at least 15 Boy Scout merit badges, and a whole bunch of Cub Scout activities that relate to our changing seasons and environment.

After our exile from the land, *Tu B'Shvat* became a day on which to commemorate our connection to Israel. During much of Jewish history, the only observance of this day was the practice of eating fruit associated with the land of Israel. However, in the 16th century, the Kabbalists of Tzfat compiled a *Tu B'Shvat* Seder called ‘Chemdat Yamim.’ In our times, the custom of a *Tu B'Shvat* Seder has been revived, and many versions have been compiled ... as far as we know, this is the very first one designed for an American Boy Scout *Tu B'Shvat* program, although no doubt Israeli Scouts have long celebrated this holiday.

The conclusion of this pamphlet includes a supplies list for the this worship service in addition to a listing of nature related advancement opportunities that would be appropriate to incorporate into this season.

Kiddush

Pour a cup of all white grape juice

Our Tu B'shvat Seder begins with a glass of white grape juice.

White grape represents nature in potential. Red grape represents nature in full bloom. On this day, we begin to leave the winter behind and move into a period of renewal and life.



We all say the blessing Borei Pri Hagafen and then drink the cup of white grape juice:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri hagafen.

Blessed are You, L-rd our God, King of the universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Wheat

Next, we eat something made of wheat - one of the grains named in the Torah, in Deuteronomy. It also says in the Psalms:

Psalms 81:17

"He would feed him with the finest wheat".

We all say the blessing Borei Minei Mezonot and then eat something made with wheat.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מִזְוֹנֹת

Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei minei mezonot.

Blessed are you L-rd our God, King of the Universe, Who creates various kinds of sustenance.

Food Suggestion: Cake or Cookies.



Wheat growing in the Hula Valley
(Source: Wikipedia,
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Wheat-haHula-ISRAEL2.JPG>)

Barley

Numbers 15:19

Next we are going to have a dish made with Barley.

The Torah says: "When you eat the bread of the Land, you shall bring an offering to God"

When we finally got to Israel, why was the offering made from barley and not from wheat?

Because barley ripens first.

Food Suggestion: Anything which includes Barley in its ingredients, such as some cereal bars.



THE LOWEST WORLD: ASIYAH



An Almond tree in bloom in Israel



A Pomegranate

We start our Seder at:

Symbolizing *Asiyah*, which means action, or doing, we eat fruits and nuts with an inedible shell.

The world of *Asiyah* is the level of existence at its most basic, sort of like a Bobcat Cub Scout on his way to Webelos, or a Tenderfoot Boy Scout, who has just started on the path to Eagle.

The fruits we eat are the most weighed down by their physicality.

----Who knows what physicality means?

Asiyah is represented by fruits and nuts with an edible inside but an inedible outer shell or peel— because in this world, the path to the center is blocked from the start. We all have good hearts, but lots of us have thick skins, it's hard to reach our hearts. Of course as Scouts we learn to give our hearts and care for others. A Scout is Helpful, a Scout is Kind.

To symbolize *Asiyah* we eat a fruit or nut with inedible outside, particularly an almond. The Hebrew name for the almond is *shaked*, from the root meaning “early rising” or “vigorous wakefulness.” An almond tree is seen to rouse itself from hibernation with leaves and blossoms while other trees still linger in their winter sleep.

We all say the blessing “Borei pri ha-aitz,” and then eat some almonds or other nuts or fruit with hard shells.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam borei pri ha-aitz.

Blessed are You, L-rd our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

Food Suggestion: Shelled almonds

Note: We can use any fruits with inedible outsides (such as hard shells). Those mentioned in Torah are pomegranates and nuts (almonds). Inedible outsides also include fruit such as avocado, citrus fruits, melons and bananas. Both shelled and unshelled nuts may be eaten. Some people have the custom that each participant in the Seder should break at least one nut from its shell to eat it.

THE SECOND WORLD: YETZIRAH

*Pour a cup of white grape juice, with a little red mixed in,
or if available a light pink grape juice*



Yetzirah, which means formation, represents birth and renewal. So the second cup of grape juice symbolizes spring, the time of rebirth. It is white just touched with red, the color of the swelling blossoms on the tree which will eventually become the fruit.

White grape juice with a dash of red parallels the gradual reawakening and first glimpse of color in nature as spring arrives. The frozen earth begins to thaw and the first blush of new plant life emerges on the hillsides.

It says in the Torah:

וְכִי-תָבֹאוּ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, וְנִטְעַתֶּם כָּל-עֵץ מֵאֵכָל...

V'khi tavo'u el ha'aretz, u'netatem kol etz ma'achal

Leviticus 19:23

"When you enter the land you shall plant all manner of trees for food"

The grapevine is unique, different from all other trees. This uniqueness is expressed by the fact that the tree has a special name - the vine, or as we say in Hebrew, Gefen - and is not merely called the "grape tree."

Representing the trees of Israel, we drink the second cup of grape juice

Yetzirah, the second world, is the world of 'Formation'—the process of creating 'Something' out of 'Something Else.' For example, we say that God created man out of the dust of the Earth.

Today is the New Year of the trees. It is also a New Year for us, for

Deuteronomy 20:19

"a person is like a tree of the field"

Now, when the trees begin to renew themselves and prepare to produce new fruits, we should each consider how to renew ourselves to produce "new fruits" in the service of God, fulfilling the point in the Boy Scout law that A Scout Is Reverent.

Yetzirah is represented by fruits with a soft, edible outside but a hard inner pit — because in this second world, we are closer to God, but the center is still blocked.

A Scout reads:

Psalms 92

"The righteous shall flourish like a date palm; like a cedar in Lebanon they shall thrive.

Planted in the house of the Lord, in the courtyards of our God they shall flourish.

They shall bear fruit even in old age; they shall be ever fresh and fragrant."

*Food Suggestion: Eat from the fruits which have inedible pits,
particularly dates and olives, plus those such as plums and peaches,
apricots, mangoes, or avocados.*

THE THIRD WORLD: BERIAH



Pour a cup half white & half red, or use a dark pink grape juice

The third cup of grape juice consists of equal parts red and white, or is a dark pink. This “balance of powers” gives it the brightest hue of red, as it shines with more light than red wine alone. It blazes like the moon in its fullness or the sun at its zenith. It symbolizes summer: the time of luxuriant growth, of nature in full bloom.

We hold up the third cup and say:

לך אכל בשמחה לחמך, ושתי בלב-טוב יינך

Lech Echol Besimchah Lachmechah; Ushteh Balev Tov Yeynechah.

Ecclesiastes 9:7

“Go, eat your bread in gladness, and drink your wine in joy. . .”

Drink the third cup of grape juice.

Beriah is the level of Divine Creation—of causing Something to arise from Nothingness, as only the Holy One can create.

Genesis 1:11-12

And God said: “Let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree bearing fruit after its kind, in which is its seed, upon the earth.” And it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing fruit, in which is its seed, after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

...That's from the Torah ... and again where do we learn in Scouting about farming and growing food?

Beriah, the third world, is represented by fruits that are totally soft and edible, with no interfering husk, shell or pit—because this world is nearer to God so that there is no obstacle to our communion with God.

The Midrash says: “Why is the Torah likened to a fig? All the fruits have something inedible in them, but the fig is good to eat in its entirety. So, all the words of Torah have nothing worthless in them.”

Food suggestion completely edible fruits: figs, seedless grapes, blueberries, strawberries.

THE HIGHEST WORLD: ATZILUT



Pour a cup of ALL red grape juice

The fourth and last cup of grape juice, symbolizing autumn, is the deepest shade of red. It is the color of life's blood spilled, of leaves at their most brilliant before they fall to the ground. It is the color of fruits fully ripened which are now ready for harvest, ready to pass on their life essence to nourish and sustain. It is the last color of the setting of the sun—and also, the first color of its rising.

Red symbolizes God, who is everywhere and is the source of everything.

Hold the fourth cup and everyone say together:

Deuteronomy 28:3

"You shall be blessed in the city, and blessed in the field.
Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, and the produce of your land, and the offspring of your cattle, the increase of your herd, and the young of your flock.
Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading trough.
You shall be blessed when you come in, and blessed when you go out."

We now drink the fourth and final cup of grape juice.



The world of Atzilut, which means emanation or the realm of pure divinity, cannot be symbolized by a fruit's physical characteristics. We do not eat any fruit for Atzilut, however it can be suggested by the scent of a fragrant fruit. The Rabbis taught that a pleasant scent delights and benefits the soul, rather than the body. On this we make the blessing, "Who gives a good fragrance to fruits."

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַנוֹתֵן רֵיחַ טוֹב בְּפֵרוֹת

Baruch atah A-donay, Elo-heinu Melech Ha'Olam Hanotein Reiach Tov Ba-perot

Blessed are you L-rd our God, King of the Universe who gives good fragrance to fruits

Pass around fragrant edible fruits (such as kumquats or an etrog—or a lemon) for all participants to smell.

We end our *Tu B'Shvat* Seder with a prayer by Reb Nachman of Bratslav. Reb Nachman died more than 200 years ago, almost exactly 100 years before the Boy Scouts of America was founded, but the prayer he wrote is perfect for what we do as Jewish Boy Scouts:

We all say together:

Master of the Universe, grant me the ability to be alone.
May it be my custom to go outdoors each day among the trees and grass,
among all the growing things, and there may I be alone to enter into
prayer.
There may I express all that is in my heart Talking to You, the One to
whom I belong.
And may all grasses, trees, and plants awaken at my coming.

We All Say::

Leshanah Haba'ah Biyerushalayim!

May we celebrate Tu B'Shvat Next Year in Jerusalem!

Food needed for Seder:

White, Red, and if possible pink, Wine -- up to 7-8 oz each white and red per participant, depending on size of cups used ... unless pink is available, which replaces about 3 oz of red

Wheat: Cookies or cakes

Barley: Anything which includes Barley in its ingredients, such as some cereal bars

Asiyah: Shelled Almonds

Yetzirah: Dates &/or Olives, plus other fruit with inedible pits

Beriah: Figs, grapes, etc.

Atzilut: A fragrant fruit of some sort

The choices should be made from the five fruits mentioned in Torah:

Grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates or the other 10 fruits of the Land of Israel: Almonds, walnuts, pecans, cherries, plums, carob, avocado, orange, raisins, strawberries,

Scout Badges involved with Nature

Merit Badges:

Animal Science
Bird Study
Camping
Environmental Science
Fish & Wildlife Management
Fishing
Fly Fishing
Gardening
Insect Study
Mammal Study
Oceanography
Plant Science
Reptile and Amphibian Study
Soil & Water Conservation
Weather

Cub Scout Belt Loops:

Fishing
Weather
Wildlife conservation

Award:

Cub Scout World Conservation