



# *A Tu B' Shvat Seder*

*With Insights from  
Rebbe Nachman of Breslov*



**BreslovWoman**

**BreslovWoman Tu B'shvat Seder**

**with**

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## Dedications

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Dedicated to Esther bas Malka and family, l'iluy nishmas Daniel ben Yosef, in honor of Ettel bas Esther Slovick, in honor of the brave Chayalim of the IDF, for a refuah sheleimah for Yermiahu ben Sarah, Meir Asher ben Michal Tamar, Yosef ben Sarah, Shani Malka bas Michal Tamar, Yehuda Leib ben Channah, in honor of Nachshon Yitzhak, In loving memory of Frances and Bess Abel, Bernard and Lila Greisman, l'iluy nishmas Yaakov ben Menashe, and for the safety of Yehuda ben Livnat, Nir ben Nurit, Aiden ben Tamar, and the speedy return of every hostage, in good health.

## Introduction

Why do Jews make the dining room the primary room of the home? In non-Jewish homes the living room, media room, and even the kitchen are the central rooms – but for Jews the dining room and especially the dining table are the center of the home. It's not because we're fressing or even essing, we are eating at table for a holy purpose.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that we can accomplish a lot by eating in holiness. He tells us that the mizbeiach (the altar in the Beit Hamikdash) abolishes evil decrees, atones for sin, nourishes and endears us – to our friends and family sitting around the table, and even to Hashem.) One's table is comparable to the altar. (The Gemara teaches that our table is like the mizbeiach, an altar and as the mizbeach atones for us so do our tables.)

Our dining tables are holy spaces indeed and we express this with many customs and halachot. For example, the Shulchan Aruch teaches that we put salt on our table before bread (and also cover our knives before Birkat Hamazon) because salt was always placed on the altar first and weapons were not allowed on the altar. We don't pass a baby or child over the table or God forbid, ever lay them down on a table so it shouldn't seem this is an offering. We are told to always speak words of Torah at every meal (even breakfast!) and to speak with general refinement at all times, and especially at table. Some people have the custom to make their table top out of plain pine boards, which they will later on use for their coffin, because this table top will be a witness to the words of Torah they spoke when sitting at table.

This respect for the dining table and the taking of our meals is something ingrained in a Jewish home – we eat with holiness all year long. When we sit down to eat the fruit of Tu B'Shvat in holiness, we can do so with the awareness that our eating is truly able to accomplish everything Rebbe Nachman says it can do: abolish evil decrees, atone for sin, nourish and endear us to each other with achdut (unity), and to Hashem. The Arizal teaches that we can accomplish tremendous tikkunim (rectifications) on Tu B'Shvat, and that when we sit down to eat fruit on that day, we should eat it with the intention of repairing the sin of Adam, who ate the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge and brought about the original exile. Remember: the words we speak at this special seder are able to blessing to ourselves and our families, as well as achieve many tikkunim (rectifications.) Rebbe Nachman teaches that every Jewish soul is part of the larger Jewish soul, therefore when we repair our own neshama, we take part in repairing the soul of the Jewish people as a whole, and in fact, the entire world.

## Tu B'Shvat Is a New Year

Tu B'Shvat is not a holiday that we absolutely must observe and indeed many people skip it, which is a shame. We must remember what Rebbe Nachman says: we can accomplish with eating in holiness and there is something special about a holiday in which the absolute main focus is eating, more so than any other Jewish holiday.

There are Four Jewish New Years: Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the New Year for Kings and Festivals; Rosh Chodesh Elul, the New Year for Animal Tithes; Rosh Hashanah, which is technically Rosh Chodesh Tishrei, the New Year for Years (the number of years since Creation), Shemitah, and the New Year for the Jewish People and the world. And then there is Tu B'Shvat, the New Year for the Trees. It is the only New Year

that is on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month and the only one which isn't on Rosh Chodesh. It is a hidden delight during the dark days of winter, yet it takes place during a full moon, just like Pesach, Sukkot and Purim.

The name Tu B'Shvat is originally from the Hebrew date of the holiday, which occurs on the fifteenth day of Shevat. "Tu" stands for the Hebrew letters Tet and Vav, which together have the numerical value of nine and six, adding up to 15. You also might simply hear it called חמשה-עשר בשבט, *Hamisha Asar BiShvat* – the Fifteenth of Shevat. On Tu B'shvat we begin to count towards Pesach. In a non-leap year, it is exactly 60 days before Pesach and 30 days before Purim (although this year, 5784, is a Jewish leap year so those periods are extended by another month.)

The Talmud tells us that Tu B'shvat is a special time for prayer, so we remind ourselves to daven with intention and focus on this day. It is also a day on which it is forbidden to fast, even if it's a chatan or kallah on their wedding day. Tachanun is not said during the mincha before Tu B'shvat and on Tu B'shvat itself. Some have the custom to not give eulogies on this day. In other words, it's a day of only pleasant restrictions and is a day of rejoicing.

### **Advice for Tu B'Shvat: Make a Bracha**

The main advice for how to celebrate Tu B'Shvat is to make a bracha (blessing) on fruit and eat a beautiful assortment of fruits. The *Pri Etz Hadar* (The Fruit of the Beautiful Tree) is the Tu B'shvat pamphlet by the students of the Arizal (originally it was called the *Chemdat Yamim* – Precious, Beloved Days). It teaches that when we say the correct bracha over a fruit, we give energy to the angel of that fruit and the angel is given a specific spiritual energy which enables it to grow more of these fruits. If we don't say the correct bracha over the fruit we are literally depriving the world of that fruit. We therefore say the appropriate bracha before we eat fruit (or any food.)

There is a power in the bracha we say after, as well. Reb Noson explains a teaching of Rebbe Nachman. Each day, and every moment in that day, Hashem sends you many opportunities to elevate the sparks that are related to your neshama. Since food contains many holy soul-sparks, Hashem sends you specific food each day, and those portions of food belong to you. By eating it in holiness, you can achieve soul-healing and wholeness. This is the meaning of bracha we say after eating most foods (including all fruits and vegetables that are not from the seven species of Israel). This bracha contains the phrase: *borei nefashot rabot v'chesronan*, which means: (He who) creates many souls with their deficiencies. Your soul has deficiencies and inside your food are the missing sparks your soul needs to be healed and whole.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov's teachings show us that eating is the path by which you can literally make up the deficiencies in your soul. How do you do this? Say the appropriate bracha on the food you are about to eat; eat; and then say the appropriate after-bracha. (See the end of this document for helpful links.)

Also, the Rebbe teaches that if you desire a certain food, it means the food contains soul-sparks that belong to you. This doesn't mean you should eat an entire cake, but rather, if you have a strong yearning for a food, make the appropriate bracha, eat a reasonable amount, and make the appropriate after-bracha to replace the missing sparks of your soul.

Fruit receives a special bracha, *borei pri haeitz*, which contains the phrase: who creates the fruit of the tree. Why does it have a special blessing? Rebbe Nachman told Reb Noson that the soul-sparks of fruit are of a very lofty source, and they contain very precious souls. You are about to accomplish great rectifications and healing with your Tu B'Shvat seder.

## The Tu B'Shvat Seder

On Pesach we make a seder (order) of 15 steps. Many Sefardim and Chassidim have something akin to a Rosh Hashana seder, as well. The Arizal's students instituted a seder for Tu B'Shvat, recorded in a pamphlet called the Pri Etz Hadar and published in the early 1700s in Venice. It is said that the Arizal's students celebrated it with 30 different types of fruit, white tablecloths, flowers and haddassim (myrtle) and candles.

The Arizal's seder is quite mystical and is divided into four sections (four cups of wine are drunk) and associated with the four worlds (Atzilut, Beriah, Yetzirah and Asiyah). According to Rabbi Chaim Vital, there are 30 fruits, 10 in each group of the 10 sefirot of the lower three of the four spiritual worlds:

First Section corresponds to Atzilut, the pure world of Emanations unseparated from Hashem. (No fruit, some might eat wheat crackers or cake.)

Second Section corresponds to Beriah, the world of Creation, the first separation or inkling of independence from Hashem, that has some kind of glimmer of meaning to us. Beriah is very pure, so the whole fruit can be eaten, skin, seeds and all, such as the apple, grapes, lemons, etc.

Third Section corresponds to Yetzirah, the world of formation, where energy is coalesced into the basic building blocks of creation. Yetzirah is less pure and therefore the whole fruit can be eaten, except for an inedible pit, such as the olive or cherry.

Fourth Section corresponds to the world of Asiyah, is the world of action, which is this world. This is the lowest world, the coarsest and most impure, and the fruits for Yetzirah have a hard, inedible shell, such as the walnut, avocado, or pomegranate.

There are several customs regarding the Tu B'Shvat seder, and for those of you who are itching to be creative, this is the one Yom Tov in which the actual practice can be something that you choose and arrange. Make the seder that delights you. Some people simply eat the seven species of Israel, some insist on 12 fruits, some 30, and some eat 50 or 72, etc. I based the following seder on the traditional sources but "ran with it." I didn't divide it according to the four worlds, per se, but I did make four sections in order to be able to feature four cups of wine as we do on Pesach. I chose 13 fruits to represent the 13 attributes of mercy. Also, the gematria of אחד (אחד) Echad (one) is 13, and Hashem is One. Also, this year (5784) is a Jewish leap year, so there are 13 months. Feel free to add to this seder and/or change it as you wish.

I kept in the traditional verses from Tanach and Talmud which are said before each fruit is eaten.

### שבֵּעַת הַמִּינִים – The Seven Species of Israel

The seven species of Israel mentioned in Parshat Ki Tavo (Deuteronomy 8:8) are: **Wheat, Barley, Grape, Fig, Pomegranate, Olive, Date** (not eaten in this order in this seder). I included them all, although I minimized the attention paid to barley, which I'll explain. Each fruit has its own correspondence to the lower sefirot and I included information on this. I also included **Etrog, Carob, Walnut, Almond, Pear, Quince**.

**Prepare for the Seder**

Buy your fruit. Feel free to buy a larger variety, than I chose. (If you buy melons, pineapple, berries or bananas know that these are not considered fruits of the tree, and will require a different bracha.) If necessary, buy ahead of time so they'll be ripe in time for your seder. Check all your fruits for insects. If you need a guide for a specific fruit, there are some on Rabbi Google, just do a search. Fruits on my list that are often particularly infested are dates, carob and figs. Also, buy red and white wine or grape juice. Bake or buy crackers, cake, cookies made of wheat and others if you like, made of barley. Set your table and decorate it beautifully. The seder begins after the evening prayers at night (this year, 2024, on the night of Wednesday, January 24.)

## Tu B'Shvat Seder

### SECTION ONE

**POUR WINE CUP 1** The first cup of wine or grape juice is white represents purity and closeness to Hashem. Pour the wine, filling each other's cups instead of our own as we do on Pesach.

#### 1. WHEAT - חיטה

**Verse - Tehillim 81:17** **יֹאכִילֵהוּ מִחֶלֶב חֶטֶה** *And he would feed him with the finest wheat.*

**Bracha** Make the bracha over grain products (mizonot.) Not everyone wants to eat barley at this seder, as it isn't included in the Arizal's seder, but if you want to eat barley, keep this in mind while you say the bracha on the wheat, as it's the same bracha and you include it in your bracha.

**Sefira – Chesed (Lovingkindness, Giving, Generosity)** Wheat represents unlimited giving and loving-kindness. In many of the world's cultures, wheat represents the most ubiquitous form of nourishment — think bread, pasta — which hints to us that the Creator's loving-kindness sustains us, as does our own reaching-out to others. We must also show loving-kindness to ourselves, especially when we are taking the first step towards overcoming obstacles to spiritual growth. Wheat can also represent the actions of humankind, who must sow, grow, harvest, thresh and knead wheat into dough, then ferment and bake. To reap the benefits of loving-kindness it takes hard work and discipline.

Wheat is also the food of wisdom. The Talmud tells us when a child is weaned and eats foods made of wheat, he reaches the age at which he can correctly identify and pronounce Abba and Ima. Our father and mother are the role models for us in how to have a relationship with Hashem, so wheat is the first sign that a child is ready to begin the journey of growing in relationship to Hashem, and the first sign on intellectual ability.

**Rebbe Nachman** The Rebbe teaches that all the tzedakah (charity) you give and acts of chesed (loving kindness) you do in this world creates Heavenly advocates for you and produces great harmony between you and your father in Heaven. Every positive deed we do creates an angel who advocates for us (or God forbid, a prosecuting angel that is created from negative actions.) Our lives in this world and the next depend on learning and living with chesed. How can we develop this attribute of chesed? The Rebbe directs us to study **מִיְדוֹת הַרְחָמִים** the 13 Divine Attributes of Compassion.

\***BARLEY- שעורה** corresponds to the sefira of **Gevurah** (restraint, judgment and strength.) It is a tougher grain, and considered to be animal feed in the Torah, but it was also an offering in the Beit Hamikdash as was wheat. To embody gevurah: Know when to say no! Develop self-restraint, healthy boundaries, and a calm and firm outlook. Overcome anger, stinginess, meanness.

## 2. OLIVE- זית (Generally prized because of Shemen Zayit, olive oil)

**Verse - Yirmeyahu 11:16** זֵית רִעֵזֵן יִפֶּה פְּרֵי-תֵאֵר קָרָא יְהוָה שְׁמִי *A leafy olive tree, beautiful with shapely fruit, that Hashem called your name*

**Bracha** – Say the blessing containing: who creates the fruit of the tree, borei pri haeitz. As you say this blessing, keep in mind all the following fruits you will eat (effectively including them in this bracha.) The seven species must be blessed and eaten in a special order: olives, dates, grapes, figs and then pomegranates. When it comes to other fruits, the halacha is we can eat whatever we prefer first. You can see that the seder doesn't follow the order of the sefira associated with each fruit, instead we eat them in the above order.

**Sefira- Yesod (Tzaddik, Foundation, Reproductive Organs)** The olive is associated with Yesod, the sefira of foundation. Halachically, we must make the blessing on the olive first. There are mystical reasons but on the simple level olive is historically a very important fruit, and valued for its oil. The olive itself tastes bitter, especially when uncured, and the bitter taste acts as a catalyst for healing. The most bitter transgressions are those related to Yesod. Eating an olive is a homeopathic spiritual remedy, like curing like. Yesod is the tzaddik, who helps us return to Hashem and sweeten our lives. Most delightfully, we begin the fruit of the tree section of the seder with the Tzaddik!

**Rebbe Nachman** The sages tell us eating the fruit of the olive causes forgetfulness. Forgetting, is not a bad thing, says Rebbe Nachman of Breslov, but is actually a very great gift. Our memories can paralyze and overwhelm us, feeding our grief, fear and guilt. By forgetting the bitter, painful times in your life, you can make room for teshuvah (return to Hashem and your true self), light and healing.

**3. DATE- תמר (In the Torah it is referred to as D'vash, honey, which means date-honey, as in "a land flowing with milk and honey." Parshat Vayelech, 31:20)**

**Verse** - Tehillim 92:13 יִשָּׁג בְּלִבָּנוֹן יִשְׁגַּח אֶת צַדִּיק כְּתֵמָר יִפְרֹחַ בְּאֶרֶץ לְבָנוֹן יִשְׁגַּח  
*A Tzaddik flourishes like the Palm Tree; like a cedar in Lebanon he will grow.*

**Sefira – Malchut (Kingship, Sovereignty, Mouth)** The date palm, which reaches up to the Heavens, with roots down here on earth, represents Malchut, Kingship and Hashem's Divine Power manifested here on earth. Malchut takes the energy from above (as it passes through the other sefirot) and distributes below. Malchut is the lowest sefira and is associated with our mouths. We reveal Hashem's Kingship in this world through our speech.

Can you take part in this manifestation of Divinity here on Earth? Yes! Recognize the incredibly powerful source of your soul, and treating yourself and others with the kind of appreciation and love that this knowledge engenders. By living up to your potential, by recognizing how precious all life, including your own is, by remembering who you really are (a holy neshama!) you live life to the fullest. Use your speech to reveal Hashem's Malchut in this world. Talk to others about Hashem. Share Torah with them. Talk Hashem yourself and believe He is listening.

Dates are sweet and nutritious—when we grow spiritually, our sustenance, no matter what it is, even bread and water, tastes sweet because we are aware of the source.

**Rebbe Nachman** The Rebbe teaches that an essential element of Malchut is emunah (faith) and that we express Malchut/emunah through prayer. In Likutey Moharan 14 he teaches that you should pray for whatever you lack, whether it is livelihood, children, or the health of a sick person. In all these things, your primary strategy should be to pray to Hashem because other strategies are generally ineffective. Believe that Hashem is good to everyone including you (Tehillim 145:9 as we say three times a day in Ashrei: טוֹב־יְהוָה לְכֹל לְכֹל וְרַחֲמָיו עַל־כָּל־מַעֲשָׂיו The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are on all His works.) He's good for healing, for parnassah (livelihood) and for everything else. Calling out to Hashem in prayer is effective for everything in the world, and this method is always available because Hashem is always there.

Now, even though you might spend a large part of our Hitbodedut (personal prayer) on spiritual matters, asking Hashem to Help you do teshuvah, grow close to Him, experience the coming of Moshiach, etc., the Rebbe and Reb Noson remind us repeatedly to daven to Hashem for everything you need - A parking space! That a recipe turns out! That your feet don't hurt! That you find a great new home! Whatever it is, small or large, we must turn to Hashem. Then we are living with the truth that Hashem is truly King in this world.

#### 4. GRAPE- גפן

**Verse** -Tehillim 12:83 אִשְׁתְּךָ כַּגֶּפֶן פְּרִיָּהּ בְּיַרְכְּתֵי בֵיתְךָ *Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the recesses of your house.*

**Sefira – Tiferet (Harmony, Compassion, Truth, Beauty, Torso)** Tiferet is compassion, a harmonic healing mixture of loving-kindness and generosity balanced by healthy boundaries. Tiferet is truth and true beauty, as well. True beauty is said to be harmony. And harmony, whether of color or sound or just people getting along, inspires us with its blend of dark and light, revealed and hidden. A harmonious blend of kindness and restraint are necessary to spiritual and physical health, a blend which ultimately embodies truth.

**Rebbe Nachman** Truth is essential to a Jew. In Likutey Moharan 112 the Rebbe teaches that us that we should fortify ourself with truth. He tells us truth is the light of Hashem and no darkness can hide it once we see it. There is nothing in this world, no evil, no darkness, no impurity, that doesn't contain an opening through which you can escape, he says. That escape begins with truth, truth gives you hope and provides light in the darkness.

Understand that truth requires bravery. You must be able to throw off, cast off, the accepted "truths" of this world and look for truth in Torah and the teachings of our Tzaddikim, the emeser emes (the genuine, "truthiest" truth.) When you see the turmoil and lies in this world, you can either despair, or cling to truth. (The enemies of truth are lies and also doubt.) There are incredible and exact predictions of what we see going on today. We find them in our holy Torah, the complete Tanach, in the Gemara, in the Kabbalistic texts, especially the Zohar and of course in Rebbe Nachman's teachings. Our sages and our beloved Rebbe Nachman ben Fayga give us bright flashes of truth. It is up to us to grab ahold of this light of truth and hang on.

**DRINK WINE – CUP 1**

**Verse** - Vayechi 49:11-12 *He binds his foal to a vine, and to a tendril [he binds] his young donkey. [He launders] his garment with wine, and with the blood of grapes binds his raiment. [He is] red eyed from wine and white toothed from milk.*

**Bracha** Drink the first cup reclining on your left side as we do at Pesach after saying the blessing containing borei pri hagafen (who creates the fruits of the vine), keeping in mind that this bracha will serve as the blessing for all the future wine or grape juice you'll be drinking at this seder

**Rebbe Nachman** *When wine enters secrets come out.* The Rebbe cautions against drinking in general, even on Purim, and says to drink just enough wine as per the mitzvah.

## SECOND SECTION

**POUR WINE CUP 2** Mostly white wine and enough red wine to make the white a pretty pink color)

### 5. FIG - תאנה

You might choose to say the shechianu blessing at this point. We say a shechechianu, the blessing on something new, when we eat fruit the first time of the season (but don't say this over the etrog as that is reserved for Sukkot.) We should make one shechianu on Tu B'shvat, remembering this will cover for any other new fruits we eat.

**Verse** Mishlei 27:18 נֹצֵר תְּאֵנָה יֹאכַל פְּרִיָּהּ וְשֹׁמֵר אֲדֹנָיו יִכְבָּד *He who guards a fig-tree shall eat its fruit, and he who guards his master shall be honored.*

**Sefira-Netzach (Victory, Endurance, Eternity, Right Leg)** Figs represent endurance and ultimately, eternal victory. Figs on the same tree ripen at different times. If you want a ripe fig, you must watch your fig tree daily. Day after day, you must endure, paying attention to each fig. If you want your life to be fruitful, pay attention to and make a commitment to your growth and connection to Hashem, and nurture it. Watch your "figs", day after day, step by step. Then you'll achieve victory.

**Rebbe Nachman** The Rebbe says you shouldn't be content with your current level. Netzach corresponds to the right leg, he teaches that you should be taking a step forward most of the time. True, sometimes you have to stand still, but in general try and walk in the path of the righteous, learning, growing, doing mitzvot and praying every day. Then your victory will be eternal, and will be experienced in Olam Haba (the World to Come).

## 6. POMEGRANATE – רימון

**Verse-Shir HaShirim 7:13** *Let us arise early to the vineyards; let us see whether the vine has blossomed, the tiny grapes have developed, the pomegranates have lost their flowers; there I will give you my love.*

**Sefira – Hod (Splendor, Majesty, Humility, Left Leg)** This Biblical fruit is beautifully, splendidly majestic — it even has a ruby-colored crown. It is also related to gratitude, and with the abundance of the ruby seeds of the pomegranate, it's easy to feel thankful for this gorgeous fruit. Without gratitude and true appreciation for the incredible world in which we live, we tend to fall into either arrogance or bitterness, both extreme blocks to spiritual growth.

Even the empty people among you are as full of mitzvot as the pomegranate is full of seeds" (Sanhedrin 37a). You have untapped goodness inside you. Look for the good points in yourself and others, says Rebbe Nachman. (Azamra, Likutey Moharan 282)

What is true majesty and splendor? Humility and modesty. The pomgranate's glory is hidden within, it is a modest fruit.

**Rebbe Nachman** Hod teaches us to embrace humility. Most of the time, he says, learn to yield, take a step back, especially when it comes to avoiding conflict. Most conflicts are not righteous, we just convince ourselves that they are. Rebbe Nachman explains that people just want to be right, they want to win. However, true majesty and true splendor is humility and the ability to yield, especially for the sake of peace. This is a way to reveal Hashem's greatness in this world, when we, as representatives of Hashem's people, avoid conflict. Hod also is taking no more from this world than what you truly need. To always feel content with what you have. (Likutey Moharan 54)

## 7. ETROG

**Verse** - Vayikra 23:40 *And you shall take for yourselves on the first day, the fruit of the hadar tree, date palm fronds, a branch of a braided tree, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for a seven-day period.*

Etrog is the fruit of the beautiful tree. Many people candy or make jam out of their Sukkot etrog and eat it on Tu B'Shvat. All those wonderful, joyous mitzvot of Sukkot are jam-packed you're your candied etrog! It is a segula for joy, health and an easy birth.

Because Tu B'shvat is the new year for the trees and the trees are judged, we use this day to pray for a beautiful Etrog for next Sukkot. On Tu B'Shvat the sap starts to flow deep within the trees and the fruit of the next harvest is begins to develop.

When we take the daled minim the Lulav represents the spine, Hadassim the eyes, Aravos the mouth. And the Etrog, the heart.

**Rebbe Nachman** Hashem wants the heart! Yes, you must learn Torah and engage in mitzvot, but Hashem wants you to align with Him, to feel Him in your heart, to love Him, to live closely with Him, knowing He is always there. Don't listen to those who say a Jew just needs to pray and do the mitzvot. Build a relationship with Hashem and create heart-awareness of His Love and Glory.

## 8. APPLE

**Verse** - Shir HaShirim 2:3 *As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the sons; I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my palate.*

We have finished with the lower seven sefirot. Now we move on to fruits that while they may be associated with a particular sefira, we don't know for sure which correspondence is correct.

From our sages:

There are three types of benefit derived from an apple; taste, sight and smell. This is symbolic of our appeal for sustenance in the three aspects of children, health and livelihood for the entire year (Ben Ish Chai)

Why were the Jewish people likened to an apple tree? It is to tell you that just as this apple tree, its fruit [begins to grow] before its leaves, so did the Jewish people declare "We will do" before "We will hear." (The Talmud)

When Yaakov came to get the brachot from Yitzchak, his clothing smelled of an apple orchard. (Maharil)

**Rebbe Nachman** The Rebbe mentions apples in a few places. In Sippurey Maasiot, for example, in the stories, The Seven Beggars and The Lost Princess which I quote from here (Translation, Breslov Research Institute's Rebbe Nachman's Stories.)

[The viceroy] went and did [exactly what she told him]. On the last day, at the end of the year, he fasted and did not sleep. Then he stood up, and was headed toward [the castle], when he saw a tree with very, very beautiful apples. It was very desirable to the eyes, and he ate an apple. As soon as he ate the apple, immediately fell asleep,\* and he slept a very long time.

The viceroy is on a mission, searching for the Lost Princess (who is the neshama, the Jewish people, and also the Shechina.) This part of the story is an allusion not only to the end of the year and Rosh Hashanah (we eat an apple dipped in honey on Rosh Hashana, the first day of the new year) but also hints to Adam eating the fruit of the Eitz Hadaat.

Interestingly it's an apple hinting to the sin of Adam. The sages have many opinions about the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. They say wheat, grapes, pomegranate, fig or carob, but never apple. Although apples are certainly mentioned in many Jewish texts, the apple as the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge appears to possibly be a non-Jewish idea. So perhaps the Rebbe refers to an apple here in this story because it represents this world as it is now, when Esav is dominant and the fruits of this current world are overtaken with non-Jewish ideas. Also, the characters in the story, while representing Jewish concepts, are not identified as Jewish or non-Jewish.

## DRINK WINE CUP 2

**Verse** - Shir Hashirim 2:4 *He brought me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me was love.*

From our sages:

What does this mean? Our sages say that Mount Sinai was a banquet where every Jew was shown the truth, and therefore was able to say: We will do and we will listen. (Matan Torah is also compared to a wedding between Hashem and the Jewish people – naturally there would be a banquet at a wedding.)

Why do we lean on the left side, when we drink, like on Pesach? There are many deep interpretations of this action, but practically speaking, it leaves our right hands free to eat and hold the wine glass. Second, we digest better. Try it. If you ate too much, too late at night, sleep on your left side at least at first, then roll over on the right so you rise up on the right in the morning. Some say this is a halacha! Many Chassidim have the custom to follow this strictly, even training young children to sleep like this.

**Rebbe Nachman** Some men were traveling with a wine merchant in the back of his wagon. They were cold and asked him if they could have a sip of wine. He told them it was fine Hungarian wine, the best, and yes, they could have a sip to warm them up. When they reached their destination, they stopped at an inn. There, the other patrons offered them some wine, telling them it was the best Hungarian wine. They tasted it and laughed. "We've tasted fine Hungarian wine, and this is surely not it."

"However, in the future," the Rebbe concluded, "when the Mashiach comes, then they will know. The time will come for them to serve the 'fine old wine' stored up for the righteous. Other people they will be able to fool. They will give them inferior Romanian wines, Wallachsians and Strovitsarians, and tell them this is the fine old vintage wine. But they won't be able to fool any of my followers, because we have already tasted the good wine."

Rebbe Nachman told this story to illustrate that his followers have had the best taste of the teachings of the true tzaddik. They are able to recognize what "fine wine" truly tastes like and are able to know what's truly good.

### THIRD SECTION

**POUR WINE CUP 3** ½ White wine and ½ Red wine

#### 9. WALNUT

**Verse** - Shir HaShirim 6:11 *I went down to the nut garden to see the green plants of the valley, to see whether the vine had blossomed, the pomegranates were in bloom.*

From our sages:

The walnut has a hard shell but has something valuable inside. The Zohar Hakodesh compares the walnut to the Heavenly Chariot which goes out of Gan Eden. Yechezkel's chariot had four essential parts, each part distinct, yet united.

We don't eat Egoz (walnuts, and some say all nuts) from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur because our sages say it causes phlegm and interferes with davening. (Some say hazelnuts are also egoz.)

**Rebbe Nachman** You are a tough nut to crack! You have so many layers and thick shell, how do you get to that delicious fruit inside? Rebbe Nachman teaches: Hitbodedut, of course. Also, he says to attach yourself to the Tzaddik, immerse yourself in the teachings of the Tzaddik, develop emunah in Hashem the true Tzaddikim and emunah in yourself. No matter what shell encloses you, believe that inside is a holy divine soul created by and connected to Hashem. The Rebbe wants you to recognize who you truly are – a being of holiness and great potential – and believe in yourself. It is essential. Because if we don't believe in ourselves, it is a rejection of Hashem. Explain.

## 10. ALMOND

**Verse** Korach 17:23 *And on the following day Moses came to the Tent of Testimony, and behold, Aaron's staff for the house of Levi had blossomed! It gave forth blossoms, sprouted buds, and produced ripe almonds.*

From our sages:

Korach rebelled and challenged the leadership of Moshe and Aharon. Hashem commanded Moshe to take a staff from each tribe and to place them in the Ohel Haedut (the Tent of Testimony). Aharon's staff sprouted and blossomed and even gave forth almonds. This was proof that Moshe and Aharon's leadership was righteous.

**Rebbe Nachman** Watch out for false leaders - today they abound. The Rebbe teaches that those who are grasping after fame and power are definitely false leaders. Who? The world at large. Most political leaders, both Jewish and non-Jewish. The Jewish world also, has those who promote ideas that are contrary to Torah. They and their movements often spread ideas that try their best to break our relationship with Hashem, chas v'shalom. Even today, there are factions of seemingly righteous people that are mixing in non-Jewish philosophies into their teachings or practices. We have to be careful. Learn the teachings of the true tzaddikim and make Hitbodedut every day, asking Hashem to help you find the right leaders, communities, teachers and friends.

## 11. CAROB

**Verse** - Breishit – 2:8-10 *And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden from the east, and He placed there the man whom He had formed. And the Lord God caused to sprout from the ground every tree pleasant to see and good to eat, and the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden, and the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. And a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it separated and became four heads.*

From our sages:

Some say carob was the fruit of the Eitz Hadaat, the Tree of Knowledge that Adam ate from. Every one of the fruits of that are said to be from the Eitz Hadaat is represented in these pages (plus others.) Even many people who don't have the custom to make a Tu B'Shvat seder have the custom to eat "bokser", carob on Tu B'Shvat, a very mystical food for a very mystical holiday. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai hid in a cave in Peki-in and he and his son Elazar hid and wrote the Zohar Hakadosh there. Hashem caused a spring to rise up and a carob tree to grow which sustained the two tzaddikim for 13 years!

**Rebbe Nachman** In the past, in order to learn kabbalistic texts, including the Zohar, a man was required to be over 40 and married. Rebbe Nachman didn't forbid learning Zohar or other mystic texts. He encouraged his followers to learn whatever texts inspired them.\* But he did tell his followers to learn something from the following every day: Halacha, Likutey Moharan, Tanach/Chumash, Gemara (men specifically) and other works of inspiration and personal growth, such as texts from the Ramchal. Although I never would speak for the Rebbe but I wouldn't be surprised if he would have encouraged us to learn sefer Chofetz Chaim if it had been published in his time. Rebbe Nachman teaches that we should respect all the authentic Torah books that are continuously being published, and that they are necessary.

\* He did tell us not to read books of philosophy which could destroy emunah by causing doubts, books such as Moreh Nevuchim (Guide for the Perplexed) by Rambam, which can make you even more perplexed, and the chapter Shar Hayichud from Chovos Halevavos.

## 12. PEAR

**Verse** - Chapter One of Kilayim, 4<sup>th</sup> Mishna (Hybrids-About which there are many laws)  
*Amongst the trees, the pears, the Custumeian pears, the quinces and the azarole are not heterogeneous. Therefore, a cross-breed between any two is halachically permitted. The apples, the crab apples, the peaches, the almonds, the jujubes, and the lote, although resembling one another are heterogenous and a crossbreed is prohibited.*

The pear is a traditional fruit that especially Russian and many European Jews would use in their charoset for the Pesach seder (although some used apple.) Nuts included would be almonds, hazelnuts or walnuts. Some used cinnamon, some ginger. And of course, wine. Many people keep these beautiful minhagim in detail as they were passed down over the centuries.

**Rebbe Nachman** There are very few minhagim (customs) in Breslov, although there certainly are some. Individual Breslov communities are distinct and some do have their own minhagim. Many other Chassidic groups were and are very focused on every move of their Rebbes and copy their every action. How and what they eat. What they wear. How they hold the kiddush cup. How they speak. And the details of each mitzvah as well as ordinary actions. Rebbe Nachman wasn't against minhagim per se, but he wants us to emulate his inner world, each in our own unique way. He encourages you to think and feel, to love and dance and pray.

### DRINK WINE CUP 3

Twelve fruits have already been eaten and we'll take a break and make a special L'chaim for the New Year. Give each other brachot and good wishes.

**Verse** - Micha 4:3-4 *And he shall judge between many peoples and reprove mighty nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nations shall not lift the sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore. And they shall dwell each man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them move, for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.*

Each man תַּחַת גִּפְנוֹ (under his vine), means his grape vine. These verses remind that fruits are mentioned many times throughout Tanach. Fruit is pri, plural perot. The consonants are the same in English, FRT, (F and P are linguistically interchangeable). You can see how the English word fruit came from the ancient Holy Tongue.

**Rebbe Nachman** Rebbe Nachman teaches us that war is literal craziness. Nation against nation, neighbor against neighbor, family member against family member. He said the development of weapons of mass destruction is one of the most evil and pointless things a people could do. Soon, Be'H, the nations will destroy their weapons and study peace instead of war.

## FOURTH SECTION

**POUR WINE CUP 4** Red wine with a drop of white in it

### 13. QUINCE VERSE

**Verse** - Mishna Brachot 6:2 *Over anything which doesn't grow from the earth one says the bracha "shehakol", by whose word all things came to be.*

The quince is the one fruit on this seder that must be cooked to be edible. (Even though generally we candy the etrog or make it into jam, it really can be eaten raw or juiced.) The taste of quince is pleasant but really it is the fragrance that is so enticing. Smell is the most spiritual and sublime of the senses. But eating raw quince is awful, it tastes like an unripe fruit.

**Rebbe Nachman** Don't eat unripe fruit, it will draw vitality from you. An unripe fruit plucked before its time, stops drawing its energy from the tree and instead has to draw its ripening power from something. If you eat it, it draws from your life force!

Don't ingest intellectual or spiritual ideas that negatively pull energy from you and sap your spiritual strength. Avoid "unripe" input (media, books, even in some cases people) that pulls out your happiness and causes grief or angst or anger. Negative input kills emunah and creates doubt. Joy is essential! Joy is also hard to define, ethereal like the fragrance of the quince. Rebbe Nachman famously says: It's a great mitzvah to be always happy.

**DRINK WINE CUP 4 FOUR.****(No Verse)****AFTER-BRACHOT**

Drink up and then say the after brachot on the Grains (Mizonot), the Wine and the Fruits of Israel, and then say the general after-bracha on the other fruits and foods you've eaten.

Serve a festive meal, play some music and dance if you are so inclined. Share Torah wisdom and the teachings of the tzaddik emet.

**Rebbe Nachman:** Every day you can start over, even many times a day.

There are certain times that it is easier to start over, when there is an et ratzon, a time of Divine Favor. Tu B'Shvat is such a time – make a fresh new beginning.

Additional information:

Find more information about Breslov learning and inspiration for women at BreslovWoman.org and join our Daily Mini-lesson Whatsapp group. <https://chat.whatsapp.com/0K6yMTGZyDyBvUI0WMpDQP> Visit our YouTube channel, Chaya Rivka Zwolinski, for video classes.

There is a beautiful introductory prayer for the Tu B'shvat Seder from the Pri Etz Hadar, available online in English translation for anyone who is interested.

[https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article\\_cdo/aid/1393354/jewish/Introductory-Prayer-from-Pri-EtzHadar.htm#:~:text=May%20it%20be%20Your%20Will,grace%2C%20blessing%2C%20and%20favor.](https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/1393354/jewish/Introductory-Prayer-from-Pri-EtzHadar.htm#:~:text=May%20it%20be%20Your%20Will,grace%2C%20blessing%2C%20and%20favor.)

A Guide to Brachot <https://oukosher.org/guide-to-blessings/>

