

A TU BISHVAT SEDER TO HEAL THE WOUNDED EARTH

by Arthur Waskow (The Shalom Center)

A TU BISHVAT SEDER TO HEAL THE WOUNDED EARTH.....	1
Introduction.....	2
A Song to Welcome the Celebrants.....	4
The Four Worlds.....	6
I. ASIYAH (Actuality, Physicality): The World of Earth.....	7
MEDITATION.....	7
SONGS.....	7
READINGS: FOOD.....	7
READINGS: FOREST.....	9
II. YETZIRAH (Formation, Relationship, Ethics, Emotion): The World of Water.....	12
SONG.....	12
READINGS.....	12
III. BRIYAH (Creative Intellect): The World of Air.....	15
SONG.....	15
READINGS.....	15
DISCUSSION.....	17
BLESSINGS.....	17
IV: ATZILUT (Being, Closeness to the Divine): The World of Fire.....	18
SONG.....	18
READINGS.....	18
DISCUSSION.....	19
BLESSINGS.....	20
MEAL.....	20
Donate to the Shalom Center and Share this Seder (CC-BY-SA).....	21

Introduction

Dear friends,

In the Land of Israel, in the midst of winter the life-juice begins to rise again in many trees, and a few begin to blossom. So Jews everywhere celebrate the ReBirthing of trees and of the Divine Tree of Life on the Fifteenth Day (Full Moon) of the Jewish midwinter lunar month of Shvat, in a festival called Tu BiShvat or Yah BiShvat. In 2014, the secular new year we have just begun, this New Year of the Trees upon the Full Moon of Shvat falls in the Western calendar on the evening of January 15.

Kabbalists in the town of Safed in the 16th century of the Common Era focused the sacred energy of the day on a sacred meal of fruit and nuts that do not require the killing of any creature, not even a carrot or radish yanked up by its root from the earth. The Seder that emerged is the meal of the Garden of Eden.

This version of the Haggadah for Tu BiShvat has been greatly adapted by Rabbi Arthur Waskow of The Shalom Center from a Haggadah shaped by Ellen Bernstein,¹ as published in *Trees, Earth, and Torah: A Tu B'Shvat Anthology* (Jewish Publication Society, 1999, ed. by Elon, Hyman, & Waskow). Bernstein wrote introductory remarks to sections of that Haggadah, many of which have been included or adapted for this one.

This Tu BiShvat haggadah focuses on healing the wounded Earth today, with passages on major policy questions facing the human race in the midst of a great climate crisis and massive extinctions of species.

In each of the Four Worlds in this Haggadah (Earth, Water, Air, Fire) there are traditional, mystical, and poetical passages, and in each there are also contemporary passages on aspects of public policy (Earth: food and forest; Water: fracking; Air: climate; Fire: alternative and renewable energy sources.) These policy-oriented passages help make this a distinctive Haggadah. After these passages, this Haggadah encourages Seder participants to take time for discussion. They may also decide to omit some passages and/or add others.

The desire for such a Haggadah grew from discussions of the Green Hevra, a network of Jewish environmental organizations. Thanks to Judith Belasco, Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, Sybil Sanchez, Rabbi David Seidenberg, Richard Schwartz, Rabbi David Shneyer, and Yoni Stadlin for comments on an earlier draft of this Haggadah.

With especially deep thanks to Ellen Bernstein and the Green Hevra, I note that neither bears responsibility for this version.

Please feel free to use this Haggadah in your own celebration and to share with others who might be moved by its fusion of spiritual ceremony, poetic insight, and activist energy for profound social change. To support [The Shalom Center](http://www.shalomcenter.org) in creating such work, please [click here](#).

– Thanks! Shalom, salaam, peace– Arthur (Rabbi Arthur Waskow²)

1 Ellen Bernstein created “The Tree’s Birthday,” the first Tu BiShvat Haggadah widely used in the US, and founded the first Jewish organization focused entirely on protection of the Earth, Shomrei Adamah, in 1988. For her continuing work, see <http://www.ellenbernstein.org>.

2 Rabbi Arthur Waskow founded (1983) and directs [The Shalom Center](http://www.shalomcenter.org). He wrote *Seasons of Our Joy* (1980), the first English-language book on the Jewish festivals to treat them all as rooted in the cycles of Earth, Sun, and Moon, and the first to treat Tu BiShvat as an integral part of the holy-day cycle. He pioneered in the shaping of Eco-Judaism, both through his books (*Seasons of Our Joy*; *Godwrestling – Round 2*; *Down-to-Earth Judaism*; editor, *Torah of the Earth* (2 vols); co-editor, *Trees, Earth, & Torah: A Tu B'Shvat Anthology*); and through The Shalom Center’s religiously rooted social action (e.g. the 1996 Tu BiShvat Seder to protect the redwood forest, the 1998 Hoshana Rabbah celebration to protect the Hudson River); as a member of the Coordinating Committee of IMAC (Interfaith Moral Action on Climate); and as a member of the Stewardship Committee of the Green Hevra.



A Song to Welcome the Celebrants

We've got the whole world in our hands;
We've got the rivers and the mountains in our hands;
We've got the trees and the tigers in our hands;
We've got the whole world in our hands.

We've got the wind and the oceans in our hands,
We've got our sisters and our brothers in our hands,
We've got our children and their children in our hands,
WE'VE GOT THE WHOLE WORLD IN OUR HANDS!



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Introductory Invocations

“Said Rabbi Simeon: ‘Mark this well. Fire, air, earth and water are the sources and roots of all things above and below, and all things above, below, are grounded in them.’” (Zohar, Exodus 23b)

“Sh’sh’sh’sh’sh’ma Yisrael, Yahhhh Elohenu, Yahhhh Echad: Hush’sh’sh’sh to Hear, you Godwrestlers: our God is The Interbreathing-Spirit of all Life; The Interbreath of Life is ONE.

“If you hush’sh’sh’sh to listen, really listen, to the teachings of *YHWH/ Yahhhh*, the Interbreath of Life, especially the teaching that there is Unity in the world and inter-connection among all its parts, then the rains will fall as they should, the rivers will run, the heavens will smile, and the good earth will fruitfully feed you. BUT if you chop the world up into parts and choose one or a few to worship – like gods of wealth and power, greed, the addiction to Do and Make and Produce without pausing to Be and make Shabbat — then the rain won’t fall – or it will turn to acid; the rivers won’t run – or they will flood your cities because you have left no earth where the rain can soak in; and the heavens themselves will become your enemy: the ozone layer will cease shielding you, the Carbon Dioxide you pour into the air will scorch your planet. And then you will perish from the good earth that the Breath of Life gives you.”

(A midrashic translation by Rabbi Arthur Waskow of the Sh’ma and its traditional second paragraph, which originally appeared in Deuteronomy 11: 13-17.)

“Know that every shepherd has a unique *niggun* [melody] for each of the grasses and for each place where they herd. For each and every grass has its own song and from these songs of the grasses, the shepherds compose their songs.”

“...Would that I merited hearing the sound of the songs and praises of the grasses, how every blade of grass sings to the Holy One of Blessing, wholeheartedly with no reservations and without anticipation of reward. How wonderful it is when one hears their song and how very good to be amongst them serving our Creator in awe.” (Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav)

“A person who enjoys the pleasures of this world without blessing is called a thief because the blessing is what causes the continuation of the divine flow of the world.”

(*Peri Eitz Hadar*, the original plan for the Tu BiShvat Seder, publ. 1728).

The Four Worlds

[If there is a leader, s/he may lead the group in the meditations at the beginning of each world, and the kavannot before the blessings. The group as a whole sings. Distribute the readings in each world – embellish here, too.... from your own sources-- before the beginning of the seder so that as many people have parts as possible. Other activities, such as dancing, storytelling, etc, should be inserted into the appropriate world. – Ellen Bernstein]



Illustration 1: Green newborn sprout on chapped earth by Panachai Cherdchukeep

I. ASIYAH (Actuality, Physicality): The World of Earth

MEDITATION

Earth is the rhythm of our feet on the Mountain. In this world, we bless the physical: our bodies, our land, our homes. It is our connection to the Earth which inspires Action. (*Ellen Bernstein*)

SONGS

“*Tzadik KaTamar*,” “You Shall Indeed Go Out with Joy,” “Inch by Inch (The Garden Grows)”

READINGS: FOOD

“And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken, yes hearken to my commandments which I command you this day, to love YHWH your God and to serve the One with all your heart and soul, then I will give the rain of your land in its season, the former rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, and your wine, and your oil. And I will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be satisfied. Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them. Then the anger of YHWH will burn against you, and the One will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land YHWH is giving you.” (Deuteronomy 11:13-17).

“In the seventh year there shall be a Shabbat to the exponential power of Shabbat; a Sabbath-pausing for the Land, for the sake of YHWH, the Interbreath of Life. Your field you are not to sow; your vineyard you are not to prune. And the Land shall not be sold in harness, for the Land is Mine; you are sojourners and resident-settlers with Me.” (Leviticus 25: 4, 23).

“And if you will not hearken to Me, I will make the land desolate, and through these days of desolation the land will find Shabbat, since it was unable to make a Shabbat-pausing when you were settled on it.” (Leviticus 26: 32-35)

“In nature, what dies and decays provides the fertility for that which is to continue. At one time farmers respected these processes and used them to advantage. Farming is no longer a way of life, no longer husbandry or even agriculture. It is big business...agribusiness.

“Agribusiness does not love the land. It treats soil as a raw material to use up. The result of the exploitation of the soil is soil erosion, soil compaction, soil and water pollution, pests and disease due to monoculture, depopulation of the country, decivilization of the city.” (Adapted from Wendell Berry, *The Gift of the Good Land*)

“Judaism teaches us to become good stewards of the Earth. But Monsanto – a major player in industrial global-corporate agriculture – is imposing genetically modified crops on more and more farms, with the result that some farmers report the growth of 'superweeds' and end up using about 25 percent more herbicides than farmers who use traditional seeds.

“Monsanto also threatens the sustainability of agriculture because its products require the use of larger quantities of water and fossil fuels in farming. While genetically engineered crops are supposed to be more drought resistant, the opposite turns out to be true.

“And Monsanto is a major threat to a sustainable climate and society because it pushes an energy-intensive agricultural model and promotes ethanol as a fuel source.” (Rabbi Mordechai Liebling)

“Jewish wisdom, from the earliest verses of Torah to the teachings of Rav Kook in the 20th century, yearn toward a vegetarian diet. Now we must do more than yearning. Current livestock agriculture contributes greatly to all four major global warming gases: carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxides, and chlorofluorocarbons. Every year millions of acres of tropical forest are burned, primarily to raise livestock, releasing millions of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. The highly mechanized agricultural sector uses a significant amount of fossil fuel energy, and this also contributes to carbon dioxide emissions. Cattle emit methane as part of their digestive and excretory processes.

“A 2009 cover article in *World Watch* magazine, ‘Livestock and Climate Change,’ by two environmentalists associated with the World Bank argued that the livestock sector is responsible for at least 51 percent of all human-induced greenhouse gases. This is largely due to the massive destruction of tropical rain forests to produce pasture land and land to grow feed crops for animals and the emission of methane from farmed animals. During the 20-year periods that methane remains in the atmosphere it is per molecule 72 times more potent in causing warming than CO₂.

According to a 2006 UN Food and Agriculture Organization report ‘Livestock’s Long

Shadow,' animal-based agriculture emits more greenhouse gases (in carbon dioxide equivalents) than all the cars, planes, ships and other means of transportation combined (18 percent versus 13.5 percent).

“A shift toward plant-based diets is essential.” (Richard H. Schwartz, president emeritus, JVNA)

READINGS: FOREST

“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 grasses, among all growing things and there may I be alone, and enter into prayer to talk with the one that I belong to.” (Reb Nachman of Bratzlav)

“Jewish mysticism imagines the cosmos to be a manifestation of the divine which unfolds through ten powers or qualities, which are called the *sefirot*. The sefirot ... are seen as both emanated and eternal, created and pre-existent; as such, the *sefirot* become the pattern both for God and creation. The world of the *sefirot* is typically pictured in terms of two forms: a cosmic tree and a primordial human body.

“The central sefirot are described both as the trunk of a body and the trunk of a tree. It is this tree which we celebrate on Tu BiShvat, the 'New Year for The Tree,' as Kabbalists understood the mishnaic phrase '*rosh ha-shanah la-ilan*.' The way in which these forms overlap has three obvious implications: 1) the human is patterned in the image of both creation and God simultaneously, 2) creation in its totality is therefore also “in God’s image,” and 3) the tree itself is also created in the image of God.

“The unity of human and tree which is the basis of the Kabbalistic Tu BiShvat seder is not just a metaphor for how important trees are to us, but a meditation on the idea that both trees and human creatures are patterned after the life of the cosmos. By examining humans and trees together, we may understand something deeper about the meaning of the life we are given and its place in the life of the world.” (Rabbi David Seidenberg, from “The Human, the Tree, and the Image of God,” in *Trees, Earth, and Torah*)

“In a brief moment in the life of our planet, we have destroyed all but a remnant of Earth’s ancient forests. Over the last 300 years, the majestic ancient forests that once covered our continent have been reduced to a small remnant. The United States has already lost a stunning 96% of its old growth forests. Worldwide, 80% of old growth forests have been destroyed, and every year another 16 million hectares fall to the ax, torch, bulldozer, or chain saw.

“As a result, thousands of creatures are at risk of extinction.

“The remaining wild forests are refuges for thousands of threatened creatures and plants, and are vital to the protection of clean water sources for tens of millions of North Americans. Wild forests also serve as refuges for the human spirit, places where we can witness the Creator’s majesty, reflect upon the mystery of life, and hear the small, still voice within. ...

“Therefore, the Central Conference of American Rabbis calls upon all Reform households, schools, synagogues, and camps to:

- recycle waste paper and buy only those paper products that are made with a high percentage of post-consumer content recycled paper;
- use only wood certified as sustainably harvested by the Certified Forest Products Council for all construction purposes;
- divest from corporations whose activities contribute to the destruction of forests in the U.S. and abroad; dedicate one Shabbat or holiday (such as Tu BiShevat or Sukkot) to learning about environmental issues and Jewish environmental ethics....
- Furthermore, the CCAR calls upon the federal government ... to protect roadless areas in National Forests ... and end all subsidies for logging and mining on public lands and immediately suspend all such activities in all old-growth forests and other threatened habitats on public lands.”

(CCAR resolution, March 2000)

DISCUSSION

BLESSINGS

For Assiyah, we eat nuts and fruits with a tough skin to remind us of the protection the earth gives. Through this act, we acknowledge that we need protection in life, both physical and emotional. We bless our defense systems. (*Ellen Bernstein*)

Say one of these *brachot* [blessings] over fruit:

Traditional *brachah* over the fruit: “*Ba-ruch ata A-do-nai El-o-hay-nu mel-ech ha-olam bo-ray pree ha-etz.* Blessed are You, Lord Our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the tree.”

Reinterpretive translation: “Blessed are You, Eternal One, the Majesty of the World, creating the fruit of the tree.”

Transformative *brachah* over the fruit: “*Brucha aht Yahhhh, El-o-hay-nu ru’ach ha-olam bo-rate pree ha-etz.* Blessed are You our God, Interbreathing-Spirit of the world, Who creates the fruitfulness of the tree.” [AW]

Eat the fruits with hard shells on the outside and soft fruit on the inside. (e.g. walnuts, oranges)

Our first cup of wine is white. In winter, when nature is asleep, the earth is barren, sometimes covered with snow. [EB]

Say one of the *brachot* over wine:

Traditional *brachah* over the wine: *Ba-ruch ata A-do-nai El-o-hay-nu mel-ech ha-olam bo-ray pree ha-gafen.* Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.

Reinterpretive translation: “Blessed are You, Eternal One, the Majesty of the World, creating the fruit of the vine.”

Transformative *bracha* over the wine: “*N’varekh et eyn ha’khayim, matzmikhat pri hagafen.* Let us bless the Wellspring of Life, that ripens fruit on the vine.” [Marcia Falk]

Drink the first cup.

II. YETZIRAH (Formation, Relationship, Ethics, Emotion): The World of Water

Yetzirah is the world of formation and birth. Water, the fluid element, gives shape to all matter. We honor the rain and rivers, the water table and the oceans that must be healed from the poisons that afflict them. [EB]

SONG

“Ushavtem Mayim”

READINGS

“Water is the place of birthing and rebirthing. ‘*Mayim*’ shares the same root as the word for What, ‘*Mah.*’ A person who immerses in water is nullifying her/his ego and asking “What am I?” Ego is the essence of permanence while water is the essence of impermanence. When a person is ready to replace his ego with a question, then s/he is also ready to be reborn with its answer.” (Aryeh Kaplan, *The Waters of Eden*)

“From the forested headwaters to the agricultural midstream valleys to the commercial and industrial centers at the river’s mouth, good and bad news travels by way of water. Did my toilet flushing give downstream swimmers a gastrointestinal disease? Did the headwaters clear-cut kill the salmon industry at the river’s mouth? Did my city’s need for water drain off a river and close upriver farmland that fed me fresh vegetables? Did a toxic waste dump leak into the groundwater table and poison people in the next county? Watershed consciousness is, in part, a promotional campaign to advertise the mutual concerns and needs that bind upstream and downstream, instream and offstream peoples together.

“This journey is right out your window - among the hills and valleys that surround you. It is the first excursion of thought into the place you live. It focuses on where your water comes from when you turn on the faucet; where it goes when you flush; what soils produce your food; who shares your water supply, including the fish and other non-human creatures. The watershed way is a middle way, singing a local song, somewhere close by, between Mind and Planet.” (Peter Warshall, *The Whole Earth Catalogue*)

“The dinner ritual I find most meaningful is washing my hands as the priests did before they performed a sacrifice. As I raise my hands to recite a blessing I remember that everything I will eat and drink contains water. Hydrofracking pollutes land, air and water. About half of the millions of gallons of water used to frack the wells remains underground, untreated. Pipes and casings are supposed to contain it, but over time cement shrinks and metal corrodes. The other half of the water is stored in tanks or

open pits that are vulnerable to leaks. This water is supposed to be treated, but few facilities are prepared to handle it...

“So to safeguard the water we drink, we have to find another source of energy. Drilling has already begun in Pennsylvania and other states. In New York a grassroots movement has resulted in a temporary ban on fracking that has slowed down the gas companies. The short term goal is to ban fracking, the long term goal is to mobilize the political will to replace our current dangerous, shortsighted, fossil-fuel based energy system with a system based on renewable energy.” (From Mirele B. Goldsmith, “[Keep The Frack Out of My Challah](#)” and “[My Fracking Nightmare and a Jewish Ritual of Dream Interpretation](#)”)

“Fracking makes water disappear... When a single well is fracked, several millions of gallons of fresh water are removed from lakes, streams, or groundwater aquifers and are entombed in deep geological strata, up to a mile or more below the water table. Once there, this water is, very likely, removed from the water cycle permanently. As in forever. It will no longer swirl with tadpoles or ripple with fish.” (Sandra Steingraber, *Raising Elijah*)

“The Jewish Council for Public Affairs believes that:

- Studies into hydrofracking impacts, including impacts on groundwater sources, surface water sources, air quality, human and animal health, infrastructure and ecosystems, should be continued and conducted with urgency by federal and state regulatory agencies. Appropriate safeguards to protect public health and the environment should be adopted and enforced based on the identification of impacts. ...
- States should require safeguards for protecting underground water sources and adequate setbacks to keep drilling sites a safe distance away from residences, schools, healthcare facilities, creeks, lakes, rivers, and sources of public-drinking-water supplies, as well from other areas of high ecological value. ...
- The drilling industry must identify all chemicals used in the fracking process, stop using any that are banned by appropriate regulation, and should be strongly urged to find and use non-hazardous substitutes for hazardous chemicals used in the fracking process. Drillers should be encouraged to recycle and/or ensure proper disposal of all wastewater.
- An increase in the natural-gas supply should not result in reduced investment in research and development of alternative and renewable energy sources.” (Adopted by [JCPA plenum in 2012.](#))

DISCUSSION



Illustration 2: Oiled Bird - Black Sea Oil Spill 11/12/07 by Marine Photobank (CC-BY 2.0)

BLESSINGS

For *Yetzirah*, we eat fruits with a tough inner core and a soft outer. Through this act we acknowledge the need to fortify our hearts. With a strong heart and a pure vision we can pull down the protective outer shell. Our lives grow richer and deeper as we become available to the miracle of nature which surrounds us. [EB]

[In some streams of Judaism, as directed by *Peri Eytz Hadar*, the brachot over the second, third, and fourth courses of fruit and wine are said by someone who has not eaten the previous fruit or wine.] Say one of the *brachot* over fruit. (See above.)

Eat the fruits which are soft on the outside and have hard pits on the inside (e. g. peaches).

As spring approaches, the sun's rays begin to thaw the frozen earth. Gradually, the land changes its colors from white to red, as the first flowers appear on the hillsides. So, our second cup will be a bit darker. We pour a little red wine into the white. [EB]

Say one of the *brachot* over wine. (See above.)

Drink the second cup.

III. *BRIYAH (Creative Intellect): The World of Air*

How can we pronounce the Unpronounceable Name of God, “YHWH”? By breathing *YyyyHhhhWwwwHhhh* – the “still silent voice” Elijah heard.

We breathe in what the trees breathe out; the trees breathe in what we breathe out. We breathe each other into life: *YyyyHhhhWwwwHhhh*.

SONG

“*Adamah v’Shamayim*”

READINGS

“Then YHWH God formed the *adam* (human earthling) of the dust of the *adamah* (earthy humus), and breathed into the nostrils the breath of life; and the human became a breathing life-form.” (Genesis 2:7)

The Hebrew word “*ruach*” means breath, wind, spirit, and Spirit. In this way it is like Greek “*pneuma*” and Latin “*spiritus*.” (Arthurs Waskow)

“Without wind, most of Earth would be uninhabitable. The tropics would grow so unbearably hot that nothing could live there, and the rest of the planet would freeze. Moisture, if any existed, would be confined to the oceans, and all but the fringe of the great continents along a narrow temperate belt, would be desert. There would be no erosion, no soil, and for any community that managed to evolve despite these rigors, no relief from suffocation by their own waste products.

“But with the wind, Earth comes truly alive. Winds provide the circulatory and nervous systems of the planet, sharing out energy information, distributing both warmth and awareness, making something out of nothing.” (Lyllal Watson, *The Wind*)

I live life in growing orbits
which move out over the things of the world.
Perhaps I will never achieve the last,
but that will be my attempt.
I am circling around God, around the ancient tower,
and I have been circling for a thousand years.
And I still don’t know if I am a falcon
or a storm, or a great song. (Rainer Maria Rilke (1899), trans. Robert Bly. *Book for the Hours of Prayer*.)

“At the Burning Bush, the unquenchably fiery Voice tells Moses that the world is about to be transformed. And the Voice says that to accomplish this, Moses and the people must set aside the old sacred Name of the Divine and call upon the Voice through a new Name: *YHWH*.

“If we try to pronounce that Name with no vowels, what we say and hear is the still small voice of Breathing. *YyyyHhhhWwwwHhhh*.

“And this Name describes the truth of our planet.

For we breathe in what the trees breathe out;

The trees breathe in what we breathe out:

We Interbreathe each other into life:

YyyyHhhhWwwwHhhh.

“What we call the “climate crisis” is a radical disturbance in the Earth’s atmosphere that has thrown out of balance the mixture of what we breathe out and what the trees breathe out — that is, the balance of CO2 and oxygen. Human action to burn fossil fuels is forcing more CO2 into the atmosphere than Mother Earth can breathe.

“So the entire web of life as the human race has known it for our entire history as a species, including human life and civilization, is coming under great strain.

“If we hear the YHWH as the Interbreathing of all life, then that Name Itself is now in crisis. God’s Interbreathing Name is harshly wounded, choking. We must act to heal the Name.

“For Moses, the new Name made possible both resisting Pharaoh and shaping a new kind of society.

“For us, it means both resisting the modern Carbon Pharaohs that are bringing new Plagues upon our planet; and shaping a new society in which we are constantly aware that all life is Interbreathing, that we are interwoven with the eco-systems within which we live — that indeed, YHWH, the Breath of Life, is ONE.

“And thus to affirm the truth of Sh-sh-sh-sh’ma! — Hush’s’h’s’h to hear the thin small Voice, the Breath of Life that’s Wholly One.” (from Rabbi Arthur Waskow, “[Do We Need to ReName God?](#)”)

“To preserve our planet, scientists tell us we must reduce the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere from its current levels of 400 parts per million to below 350 ppm. But 350 is more than a number—it’s a symbol of where we need to head as a planet.

“Start a Campaign to Divest From Fossil Fuels! We’re all part of institutions that ought to be looking out for the public good, from city and state governments to religious institutions to other kinds of charities and non-profits. Most of these institutions invest money in stocks and bonds, and have a responsibility to divest from an industry that’s destroying our future.

“Fossil Free is an international campaign calling on institutions to divest from fossil fuels and reinvest in solutions to climate change.” (<http://350.org/mission> and <http://campaigns.gofossilfree.org/>)

DISCUSSION



Illustration 3: Illustration from the 1897 Bible Pictures and What They Teach Us: Containing 400 Illustrations from the Old and New Testaments: With brief descriptions by Charles Foster

BLESSINGS

For *Briyah* we taste fruits that are completely edible. In this world, where God's protection is close at hand, we can let go of all barriers and try on freedom. We are co-creators with God [EB]; indeed, we ourselves take part in ***YHWH***, the Interbreath of Life.

Say one of the *brachot* over fruit. Eat the fruits which are soft throughout (e.g. strawberries, grapes).

In summer, when vegetable and fruits are abundant, we are reminded of the richness of life, filled with color. We drink red wine with a dash of white. [EB]

Say one of the *brachot* over wine. Drink the third cup.

IV: ATZILUT (Being, Closeness to the Divine): The World of Fire

There's a fire alive within every living cell of every being. The carbons we eat burn in the presence of the oxygen we breathe giving us the energy to be. This spark of light is our connection to the Divine. [EB]

SONG

“B'orech nirey or – In Your light do we see light,” “This little light of mine.”

READINGS

“And the messenger of *YHWH/ Yahhhh*, the Interbreathing-Spirit of all life, appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he [Moses] looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.” (Exodus 3:2).

“Here! The day is coming that will flame like a furnace, says the Infinite *YHWH / Breath of Life*, when all the arrogant and all evil-doers, root and branch, will like straw be burnt to ashes. Yet for those of you who revere My Name, a sun of justice will arise with healing in its wings /rays... . Here! Before the coming of the great and awesome day of *YHWH/ the Breath of Life*, I will send you the Prophet Elijah to turn the hearts of parents to children and the hearts of children to parents, lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction.” (Malachi 3: 20-21, 23-24.)

[A midrashic reading of Malachi for our generation:]

“Your planet is heating like a furnace. Already droughts scorch your continents, already your waters boil into typhoons and hurricanes, already the ice melts and your sea-coasts flood. Yet even now you can turn away from the fires of coal and oil, turn to the solar energy and the winged wind that rise from a sun of justice and tranquility to heal your planet. For God's sake, you must all take on the mantle of Elijah! Turn your own hearts to the lives of your children and the children of your children, turn their hearts to learning from the deepest teachings of the Wisdom you inherited – that together you can yet avert the utter destruction of My earth.” (Rabbi Arthur Waskow, [“A Sun of Justice with Healing in its Wings”](#))

“The Central Conference of American Rabbis:

1. Reaffirms our 1975 resolution supporting the development of a national energy

policy centered on conservation and development of alternative energy sources.

2. Calls upon governments at all levels to enforce existing legislation and policies to achieve these goals.

3. Calls upon the oil, automobile, and other industries which produce energy or contribute to its use to develop policies.

4. Opposes off shore oil-drilling, drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and drilling in any environmentally sensitive area.

5. Calls upon the federal, state and local government to enact legislation that would mandate energy efficiency and develop safe and renewable energy sources.”

(Adopted by the 103rd Annual Convention of CCAR, April, 1992)

DISCUSSION

BLESSINGS

As summer turns to fall, plants are preparing seed for the next cycle of nature. We too must nourish the world for the coming generation. Just as the natural world goes through changes to achieve its full potential, we also need to change: we need to get rid of anger, envy and greed so that we can be free to grow. When we do this, we will become very strong, healthy trees, with solid roots in the ground and our arms open to the love that is all around us. Many of our trees become red. We will drink the fourth cup full-strength red. (Ellen Bernstein)

Say one of the *brachot* over wine.

Drink the fourth cup.

At the level of Being, the Fruit is fully potential, expressing the Will to create, and is not itself a creation. Therefore we pause to say the blessing over life renewed and ever-growing, with no physical fruit:

Traditional brachah: “*Ba-ruch ata A-do-nai El-o-hay-nu mel-ech ha-olam sheh’hekhianu v’kimanu v’higianu lazman hazeh..* Blessed are You, Lord Our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who fills us with life, lifts us up, and carries us to this moment.

Transformative brachah: “*Brucha aht Yahhhh, El-o-hay-nu ruach ha-olam olam sheh’hekhiatnu v’kimatnu v’higiatnu lazman hazeh.* Blessed are You our God, Interbreathing-spirit of the world, Who fills us with life, lifts us up, and carries us to the moment of THIS.”

Sing Debbie Friedman or Shefa Gold versions of the blessing.

MEAL

After the fourth cup, a fuller meal using the foods that are mentioned in Deuteronomy 8: 7-9: “...a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil, and honey; a land in which you shall eat bread without scarceness,” may be eaten.

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