

DIGITAL VERSION



Activity Kit

Tu BiShevat

Programs and activities
for an Interactive Tu BiShevat Seder



ההסתדרות הציונית העולמית
המערך לשירותים רוחניים בתפוצות
World Zionist Organization
Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora



The Institute for Torah and the Land of Israel

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In addition to this booklet, the set includes:

A table cloth runner for the Tu BiShevat Seder

Written by: Rabbi Moshe Bloom, English Department Director, Torah VeHa'aretz Institute
Edited and published by: Ilan Frydman, Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora, World
Zionist Organization
Translated into English by: Shoshan Levy
Graphic Design: Hamutal Lawrence
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Greetings by Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman

Dear Friends,

You have before you the activity kit for Tu BiShevat, including a Tu BiShevat seder, during which you will learn about the seven species unique to the Land of Israel, as well as the mitzvot tied to the Land of Israel.

This kit is accompanied by a table runner, which features links to video clips, songs, and quizzes connected to the Tu BiShevat Seder proceedings. This Seder was put together by the 17th century sages of Safed to highlight the centrality of the Land of Israel in Jewish life—both in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora.

This kit is the result of a collaborative effort of both the Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora and the Torah VeHa'aretz Institute. I would like to thank Ilan Frydman, content and project manager at the Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora, and Rabbi Moshe Bloom of Torah VeHa'aretz Institute, who produced this beautiful kit.

The Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora, in contact with hundreds of rabbis and lay leaders of Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora, runs extensive activities to strengthen Jewish identity and the bond to the State of Israel. These activities include various areas, including producing educational kits and teachings aids.

It is our hope that the kit before you will be a useful and effective tool to strengthen Jewish-Zionist identity and deepen the bond of Diaspora's Jewry with the State of Israel.

Happy Tu BiShevat!

Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman
Head of the Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora

[To the Website of the Center for Religious Affairs
in the Diaspora](#)



Greetings by Rabbi Yaakov Ariel

Tu BiShevat is considered the new year for trees, since it is the date that determines the onset of halachic obligations vis-à-vis the mitzvot tied to the Land of Israel. These vary from year to year and include terumot, ma'aserot, orlah, and neta revay.

Even when in exile, far from our Land, and we were unable to perform the mitzvot tied to the Land of Israel, we would still keep the Land of Israel at the forefront of our minds. We did this especially by eating fruit, primarily the fruit unique to the Land of Israel—grapes, figs, pomegranates, dates, and olives. While it once was difficult to get ahold of fruit that grew in the Land of Israel, especially since it was desolate and barren, at least this was a remembrance of the Holy Land.

Thank G-d we merited to see the beginning of the revealed redemption, and the Land of Israel is blooming. The mitzvot tied to the Land of Israel have become relevant once again and are practiced. Israel even exports its quality fruit abroad. The Jews of the Diaspora, happy to participate in Israel's joy, celebrate the day by eating its authentic fruit. This they do by ensuring that terumot and ma'aserot were taken (this can be done also outside of Israel), and they are not orlah. In this way, they can take part in building the Land both physically and spiritually.

This day strengthens the bond between the Jewish People and its homeland and birthplace, and in this way, it also brings together Jews throughout the Diaspora and unifies them as one.

"Since You are one, and Your name is one, and who is like Your nation, Israel, one nation—in the Land!"

Sincerely,

Rabbi Yaakov Ariel
President of the Torah VeHa'aretz Institute

[About Torah VeHa'aretz Institute](#)



Preparations for the Tu BiShevat Seder

Buying the food

- **Wheat**—cookies, crackers, cake, noodles, orzo, etc., made out of wheat flour.
- **Barley**—pearled barley, barley cookies, barley pudding, beer/wiskey for adults.
- **Olive**—olives, pitted or with pits.
- **Date**—Moist or dried dates, date honey, date cookies.
- **Grapes**—Fresh grapes or raisins.
- **Fig**—Fresh or dried figs.
- **Pomegranate**—It's best to seed the pomegranate ahead of time. Pomegranate juice is also possible.
- **Additional fruit**
- **Wine**: Buy wine and/or grape juice. Some use both red and white wine.
- It's also possible to buy a vegetable to say a "borei perei ha'adama," and a fruit juice, to say shehakol on. Some also bring various herbs to say the four blessings on smells.
- If possible, plan ahead and purchase fruit grown in the Land of Israel and fruit from the seven species, or other fruits and vegetables grown in Israel.
- It's preferable to eat dried fruit from Israel than fresh fruit grown elsewhere.
- It's possible to eat either dried or fresh fruits.
- It is important to check the fruit for insects, especially figs and dates.

Seder Proceedings

- Spread out the runner as the table cloth.
- Ensure that all participants have smartphones.
- The Seder leader uses the activity pamphlet as a guide to facilitate the Seder.
- If possible, have participants take turns reading aloud the excerpts from midrashim about the various fruit.
- Blessings should be recited by everyone together, out loud.

Tu BiShevat: a History

The four new years are ... on the first of Shevat, the new year for trees, according to the words of the House of Shammai; the House of Hillel says: on the fifteenth thereof (Mishna Rosh Hashana 1:1).

Tu BiShevat went through two significant historical developments, all revolving around the bond between the Jewish People and the Land of Israel:

1. Tu BiShevat in halacha—the mitzvot tied to the Land of Israel

Orlah: The Torah prohibits eating orlah fruit, that is, fruit of a tree that has not completed three years since being planted, whether in the Land of Israel or abroad. The cut-off date determining the orlah year for the fruit is Tu BiShevat, following the opinion of the House of Hillel in the Mishna. That is, fruit that blooms from Tu BiShevat and on, following three years from when the tree is planted, are no longer considered orlah and are permissible to eat.

Terumot and Ma'aserot: Fruit grown in the Land of Israel are subject to separating offerings and tithes, terumot and ma'aserot. Fruit that bloomed prior to the fifteenth of Shevat, Tu BiShevat, need to have terumot and ma'aserot set aside separately from fruit that bloomed after Tu BiShevat. There are differences between the years in the shemita cycle, including the types of ma'aserot that need to be separated (some years ma'aser sheni, the second tithe; other years, ma'aser ani, the poor man's tithe). It is necessary to separate terumot and ma'aserot (without a blessing) from fruits and vegetables exported from Israel, purchased abroad.

Tu BiShevat is considered a joyous day. Tachanun is not recited, and one does not fast.

2. The Tu BiShevat Seder

The 17th century kabbalists of Safed instituted a Tu BiShevat Seder, which involved eating fruit from the Land of Israel. The desire to eat fruit on Tu BiShevat that is not necessarily available in the market during this period was the reason why people purchased dried fruit. In addition, Jewish communities in the Diaspora who wanted to eat fruit from the Land of Israel generally needed to buy dried fruit, since it took a long time for the fruit to arrive. For these two reasons, the custom developed to eat dried fruit on Tu BiShevat.

Note that today it is possible to purchase fresh fruit from Israel, which is preferable to dried fruit. The point is to eat fruit from the Land of Israel; it's unnecessary to buy dried fruit that wasn't produced in Israel.

In recent years, new customs and ideas have been attached to Tu BiShevat:

Arbor Day

At the end of the 19th century, the Zionist movement began to celebrate Tu BiShevat as a sort of Arbor Day, dedicated to planting saplings in the Land of Israel.

Environmental Protection Day

In recent decades, Tu BiShevat has been celebrated as a Green Earth Day, a holiday dedicated to environmental protection, as G-d commanded Adam:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, He took him for a tour of all the trees of the Garden of Eden, and said to him: "Behold my creations, how beautiful and praiseworthy they are. And everything I created, I created for you. Take care not to damage and destroy my world, for if you damage it, there will be no one to fix it up after you" (Midrash Kohelet Raba §9).

Tu BiShevat 5709 (February 14, 1949) was date of the inauguration of the State of Israel's First Knesset!

Blessings during the Seder

Order of the blessings

The order of blessings is the Hebrew acronym of **מגע אש**, maga eish (lit. "touch of fire"): mezonot, gefen, etiz, adama, shehakol. At the start of the Seder we eat a food whose blessing is mezonot, then we recite a blessing over wine (or grape juice), and then on a fruit.

It is recommended to add a vegetable whose blessing is ha'adama, and a food with the blessing of shehakol, in order to make more blessings.

Some also add the blessings over pleasant scents (borei atzei besamim, isbei besamim, minei besamim, hanoten re'ach tov baferot).

Order of eating fruit

First we partake of fruit from the seven species, indigenous to the Land of Israel. Whichever fruit appears in the verse closer to the word *eret* (land), comes first: **"אֶרֶץ חִטָּה וּשְׂעֹרָה וְגִבְן וְתַאֲנָה וְרִמּוֹן, אֶרֶץ זֵית שָׁמֶן וְדִבְשׁ"** "A land of wheat and barley, of grapevines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil olives and date honey" (Duet. 8:8). For this reason, the order for eating fruit is: olive, date, grape, fig, and pomegranate.

After eating fruit from the seven species, it is possible and laudable to eat other fruit as well. Some customarily partake of 30 (!) different types of fruit. If eating a new (=seasonal) fruit, one should also recite *shehechyanu*:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיָּמָנוּ וְהִגִּיעָנוּ לְזֶמֶן הַזֶּה

Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, she-hecheyanu

ve-kiyemanu ve-higiyanu la-zeman ha-zeh

Blessed are you, O Lord, our G-d, king of the universe, who has kept us alive, and sustained us, and brought us to this time

Tu BiShevat Seder

Wheat

On the verse, "Your belly is like a heap of wheat" (Song of Songs 7:3), our Sages explain "While heaps of pepper and cedar fruit are much nicer than these, so why are Israel likened to wheat? Rather, man can live without pepper and cedar fruit, and cannot live forever without wheat—just the world cannot survive without wheat, the world cannot survive without the People of Israel" (Shir HaShirim Raba §7).

Let's all take a food made out of wheat in our right hand, and say together aloud:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי מְזוֹנוֹת

Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei minei mezonot

Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, king of the universe,
Who creates types of grains

The discovery of wheat's ancestor

Aaronson discovers the ancestor of modern wheat in 1906



Agriculture in the Negev

The farming miracle in the Arava desert



Song: Tu BiShevat song



Barley

One who sees barley in a dream [has received a sign that] his iniquities have been taken away, as it is stated: "And your iniquity has gone away, and your sin expiated (Isaiah 6:7)" (Berachot 57a).

Barley is used for animal fodder, and symbolizes the animalistic part of the human being. People sin because of their animalistic drives, not because of their spiritual side. So one who dreams about barley essentially is seeing their sins leaving them: "your iniquity has gone away."

Beer production

The brewing process in 100 seconds



Barley: the quiz

How much do you know about barley?



Wine and Four Cups

Borei Peri Hagafen

Since Tu BiShevat is not a holiday, there is no special Kiddush recited. We will just say the blessing together:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei peri hagafen

Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, king of the universe,

Who creates fruit of the vine

Four cups of wine

There is a new custom not mentioned by the kabbalist, that parallels Tu BiShevat to the Pesach Seder, where four cups of wine are drunk. Each cup symbolizes a different season:

First cup: white wine—fall

Second cup: mostly white wine, some red wine—winter

Third cup: half white, half red—spring

Fourth cup: red wine—summer

For those who want to incorporate this practice, we recommend the following order: Wheat and barley, first cup, olive and date, second cup, grape and fig, third cup, pomegranate, fourth cup.



Olives

Why are the People of Israel likened to an olive tree? Just like an olive tree's leaves do not fall away, not during the summer and not during the rainy season, so too the People of Israel—they will not ever cease to exist, not in this world, nor in the world to come

(Yalkut Shimoni, Jeremiah §289).

Let's all take an olive in our right hand and say together aloud:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרִי הָעֵץ

Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei peri ha-eitz

Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, king of the universe,

Who creates fruit of the tree

 **Olive Press in Benei Darom**



 **Olive oil production in Ne'ot Qedumim (for children)**



 **Tu BiShevat: a History**



Dates

Why are the People of Israel likened to a date palm? Just as date palms produce no waste—rather dates are for eating, and lulavim are for hallel (for the four species on Sukkot), fronds are for shade, fibers for ropes ... so too are the People of Israel, they have no waste, rather: some are masters of the Bible, some masters of the Mishna, some masters of Aggada, some perform mitzvot, some perform righteous deeds (Bereishit Raba §41).

A date pit found on Masada



Dates: the quiz

How much do you know about dates?



Eating a vegetable and candy

For those interested, it's possible to add a vegetable (preferably from Israel), and make the following blessing:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה
Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei peri ha-adama
 Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, king of the universe,
 Who creates fruit of the ground

Afterwards, take a food whose blessing is shehakol
 (candy, ice cream, chocolate, etc.), and say:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָ בְּדַבָּרוֹ
Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, she-hakol nihiya bidvaro
 Blessed are You, Lord, our G-d, king of the universe,
 everything came to be at His word

Grapes

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish says: why are the Jewish people likened to a vine? The branches of the vine are [represented by] the homeowners. The clusters, these are the Torah scholars. The leaves on it are the ignoramuses. The tendrils, these are the empty ones of the Jewish people. And they are all on the same vine. Why is this? The clusters [represented by the Torah scholars] will ask for mercy for the leaves [the ignoramuses], since without the leaves, the clusters cannot exist (Chullin 92a).

Winepress in Zipori

A winepress was discovered in the remains of an ancient structure in Zipori



Israeli wines

A Wine-Oasis in the Israeli Negev Desert



Song: Halevay

Boaz Sharabi



Figs

"He who tends to a fig tree will enjoy its fruit" (Proverbs 27:18). Why is the Torah likened to a fig tree? Since most fruit trees, such as the olive tree and grapevine are harvested all at once, while the fig tree is harvested little by little. So too, with the Torah: today one acquired a little, and tomorrow a lot, since it is not acquired one in one year, and not in two (Bamidbar Raba §12).

How are fig trees pollinated?

Fig tree pollination by wasps



Figs: the quiz

How much do you know about figs?



Herbs

For those interested, it is possible to add the blessing over sweet-smelling herbs.

For perennial herbs, or sweet-smelling trees:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֵצֵי בִשְׁמִים

Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei atzey besamim

Blessed are you Lord, our G-d, king of the universe, Who creates sweet-smelling trees

For bushes or grasses:

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא עֲשְׂבֵי בִשְׁמִים

Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei isbey besamim

Blessed are you Lord, our G-d, king of the universe, Who creates sweet-smelling grasses

For sweet-smelling fruit (such as an Etrog):

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הַנוֹתֵן רִיחַ טוֹב בְּפִרוֹת

Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, ha-notein reiach tov ba-feirot

Blessed are you Lord, our G-d, king of the universe, Who gives a pleasant scent to fruit

On combinations of tree and grass scents, or an animal-based scent (we do not make blessings on artificial scents):

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא מִיְּנֵי בִשְׁמִים

Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei minei besamim

Blessed are you Lord, our G-d, king of the universe, Who creates types of spices

Pomegranates

"Your temples [rakatech] are like a split pomegranate" (Song of Songs 6:7) ... Do not read: Your temples [rakatech], but rather: "Your empty ones [reikateich]," meaning that even the sinners among you are full of mitzvot like a pomegranate (Eiruv 19a).

Try to count together the number of seeds in your pomegranate. Did you come close to 613?

The pomegranate seed count

How many seeds does a pomegranate really have?



Medicinal properties

12 health benefits of pomegranates



Song: Tu BiShevat is here



Mitzvot Tied to the Land of Israel

Orlah in a minute

The prohibition of using fruit in the first three years—in 90 seconds



Shemitah in a minute

The mitzvah of the sabbatical year—in 90 seconds



Pe'ah in a minute

The mitzvah of leaving a corner of the field—in 90 seconds



Ma'aser sheni in a minute

The mitzvah of the second tithe—in 90 seconds



Kila'im in a minute

The prohibitions against interplanting and grafting—in 90 seconds



Challah in a minute

The mitzvah of taking challah—in 90 seconds



After Blessings

ברוך אתה ד' אלקינו מלך ברוך אתה ד' אלקינו מלך העולם על המחיה ועל הכלכלה ועל הגפן ועל פרי הגפן ועל העץ ועל תנובת השדה ועל ארץ חמדה טובה ורחבה שרצית והנחלת לאבותינו לאכול מפריה ולשבוע מטובה. רחם נא ד' אלקינו על ישראל עמך ועל ירושלים עירך ועל ציון משכן כבודך, ועל מזבחר, ועל היכלך, ובנה ירושלים עיר הקדש במהרה בימינו. והעלנו לתוכה ושמחנו בבניינה, ונאכל מפריה ונשבוע מטובה ונברךך עליה בקדשה ובטהרה. כי אתה ד' טוב ומטיב לכל ונודה לך על הארץ, ועל המחיה ועל פרי הגפן (if grown in Israel) ועל פרי גפנה, ועל הפירות (if grown in Israel) ועל פירותיה. ברוך אתה ד' על הארץ ועל המחיה ועל הכלכלה, ועל פרי הגפן (פרי גפנה) ועל הפירות (פירותיה)

Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, al ha-michya ve-al ha-kalkala, ve-al ha-gefen ve-al peri hagefen, ve-al ha-eitz ve-al peri ha-eitz ve-al tenuvat ha-sade, ve-al ertz chemda tova u-rechava she-ratzita ve-hinchalta la-avoteinu, le-echol mi-pirya u-lisbo'a mi-tuva. Racheim na adonai eloheinu al yisrael amecha ve-al yerushalayim irecha, ve-al tziyon mishkan kevodecha, ve-al mizbechecha, ve-al heichalecha. U-vene'i yerushalayim ir ha-kodesh bimheira ve-yameinu. Ve-ha'aleinu le-tocha ve-samecheinu be-binyana, ve-nochal mi-pirya, ve-nisba mi-tuva, u-nevarechecha aleha bi-kedusha u-ve-tahara. Ki ata adonai tov u-meitiv la-kol venode le-cha al ha-arets ve-al ha-michya, ve-al peri ha-gefen (if grown in Israel: ve-al peri gafna), ve-al ha-peirot (if grown in Israel: ve-al peiroteha). Baruch ata adonai al ha-arets ve-al ha-michya (some add: ve-al ha-kalkala), ve-al peri ha-gefen (peri gafna) ve-al ha-peirot (peiroteha)

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, for the sustenance and for the nourishment and for the vine and for the fruit of the vine and for the tree and the fruit of the tree, for the produce of the field, and for the precious, good, and spacious land which You have graciously given as a heritage to our ancestors, to eat of its fruit and to be satiated with its goodness. Have mercy, Lord our G-d, on Israel Your people, on Jerusalem Your city, on Zion the abode of Your glory, on Your altar, and on Your Temple. Rebuild Jerusalem, the holy city, speedily in our days, and bring us up to it and make us rejoice in it, and we will bless You in holiness and purity. For You, Lord, are good and do good to all, and we offer thanks to You for the land and for the sustenance, the fruit of the vine (if grown in Israel: "its vine"), and the fruits (if grown in Israel: "its fruit"). Blessed are You Lord, for the land and for the sustenance, the fruit of the vine (its vine), and the fruits ("its fruits").

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ד' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, בּוֹרֵא נִפְשוֹת רַבּוֹת וְחֲסִירוֹנָן, עַל כָּל מֵה
שֶׁבְּרָאתָ לְהַחְיֹת בָּהֶם נֶפֶשׁ כָּל חַי, בְּרוּךְ חַי הָעוֹלָמִים

*Baruch ata adonai eloheinu melech ha-olam, borei nefashot rabot va-
chesronan, al kol mah she-baratah le-hachayot ba-hem nefesh kol chai,
baruch chay ha-olamim*

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, Creator of numerous
living beings and their needs, for all the things You have created with which
to sustain the soul of every living being,
blessed is He who is the Life of the worlds

Follow-up Activities

The film Adama-Land

A film about Aliya of Rabbi Yisrael of Shklov (1809-5570),
(recommended for high school and up)



Rabbi Yisrael of Shklov, a disciple of the Gaon of Vilna, made Aliya in 1809-
5570, and became the leader of the religious community (perushim) in Safed.
There, Rabbi Yisrael wrote Pe'at HaShulchan, a treatise on the laws of the
special mitzvot tied to the Land of Israel. The film describes the many trials and
tribulations that Rabbi Yisrael faced, together with the rest of the Jews living in
the Land of Israel at the time, and portrays their tremendous self-sacrifice and
unwavering, steadfast dedication to settling the Land of Israel.

Game: Name that Place

Instructions:

1. Split up into two groups.
2. For three minutes, each group writes down as many names of places in your
country or in the world whose names are connected to the seven species.

Variation: the places can be connected to trees in general, not limited to the
seven species.

Follow-up Torah Study

The New Year for Trees: How does Jewish law define trees and vegetables?

What is the new year for fruit? What is the new year for vegetables?

Mishna Rosh Hashana (1:1):

אַרְבַּעַה רְאשֵׁי שָׁנִים הֵם: ... בְּאַחַד בְּתִשְׁרֵי רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְשָׁנִים וְלִשְׁמַטִּין ...
וְלִירֵקוֹת. בְּאַחַד בְּשֶׁבֶט, רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְאֵילָן, כְּדִבְרֵי בֵּית שְׁמַאי. בֵּית הַלֵּל
אוֹמְרִים בְּחֻמְשָׁה עָשָׂר בּו.

**There are four new years ... On the first of Tishrei, the new year for
years ... and for the vegetables. On the first of Shevat, the new year
for the trees according to the words of the House of Shammai; The
House of Hillel says: on the fifteenth thereof.**

Tu BiShevat (15 Shevat) is the new year for fruit trees, while 1 Tishrei is the
new year for vegetables. What is considered a tree and what is a vegetable?
What is the halachic definition of a fruit? What about borderline fruit—such as
bananas, eggplant, papaya, and raspberries? This question is relevant when it
comes to determining when the new year is and relates to the laws of kila'im
(interplanting), and orlah (not using fruit in the tree's first three years), as well
as blessings.

How does the Tosefta distinguish between fruits and vegetables?

Tosefta Kila'aim (3:15):

זֶה הַכֵּלָל: כָּל הַמוֹצִיא עָלָיו מֵעֵיקְרוֹ הִרִי זֶה יֵרֶק,
וְכָל שֶׁאֵין מוֹצִיא עָלָיו מֵעֵיקְרוֹ הִרִי זֶה אֵילָן.

**This is the rule: whatever produces leaves from its primary source is
a vegetable, while whatever does not produce leaves from its primary
source is a tree.**

That is, any plant that renews itself from its roots is considered a vegetable,
while plants whose budding area is above its root (from a trunk) are considered
trees.

An additional definition of tree vs. vegetable is brought in the context of the laws of blessings, to determine when to say borei peri ha'adama or borei peri ha'etz.

What is the Talmud's definition?

Tractate Berachot 40:

היכא מברכין בורא פרי העץ - היכא דכי שקלת ליה לפירי איתיה לגוואא והדר מפיק, אבל היכא דכי שקלת ליה לפירי ליתיה לגוואא דהדר מפיק - לא מברכין עליה בורא פרי העץ אלא בורא פרי האדמה.

Where does one recite: "Who creates fruit of the tree"? Only in a case where, when you take the fruit, the branch remains and again produces fruit. However, in a situation when you take the fruit, the branch does not remain and again produce fruit, we do not recite the blessing: "Who creates fruit of the tree," but rather: "Who creates fruit of the ground."

There are several interpretations of this passage. According to the Geonim, this means that any growth whose branches shrivel up, but is renewed from its roots, is considered a vegetable, and its blessing is borei peri ha'adama. In this way they equate the Talmud's definition with that brought in the Tosefta, in the context of kila'im.

How does the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law; Rabbi Yosef Karo), and the Rema (Rabbi Moshe Isserles, in his gloss) rule on this matter?

Shulchan Aruch, OH (§203: 1-3):

על פירות הארץ מברך בורא פרי האדמה.
על התותים הגדלים בסנה, בורא פרי האדמה. רמ"א, הגה: דלא מקרי עץ אלא שמוציא עליו מעצו, אבל מה שמוציא עליו משרשיו לא מקרי עץ, והני כיון דכלה עציו לגמרי בחורף והדר פרח משרשיו, מברכין עליו בורא פרי האדמה. על המאוזי"ש (בננה), בורא פרי האדמה.

On the fruit of the land, one says the blessing "Who creates the fruit of the land." For strawberries growing in a bush, "Who creates the fruit of the land." Rema: Note: a [plant] is not called a tree unless it produces leaves from its tree [trunk]; however [a plant] that produce

leaves from its roots is not considered a tree. And in this case, because its tree [trunk] withers completely in the winter and returns to flower from its roots, one says the blessing "Who creates the fruit of the land" on it. For bananas, "Who creates the fruit of the land."

Shulchan Aruch (YD §296:15):

זה הכלל: כל המוציא עליו מעיקרו, הרי זה ירק. וכל שאינו מוציא עליו מעיקרו, הרי זה אילן.

This is the rule: whatever produces its leaves from its primary source is a vegetable, while whatever does not produce its leaves from its primary source is a tree.

The Shulchan Aruch and the Rema rule in accordance with the opinion of the Geonim, and have a uniform definition for both the laws of blessings and the laws of orlah and kila'im.

What is the definition of the Radbaz (Rabbi David ben Zimra)?

Radbaz Responsa (3, 731):

אודות הבירנגאן (חציל)....ונתחדש לי טעם אחר שאין בכל מיני אילן שזורעין הגרעין ועושה פרי בתוך שנתו כזה הילכך ירק הוא.

As for the eggplant ... and I have seen another reason: since the following [phenomenon] does not occur among any type of tree—that a seed is sown and produces fruit within the year, as this does. For this reason, it is a vegetable.

How does the Chazon Ish (Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz) define vegetables and trees?

Chazon Ish (Orlah 12:3):

ונראה דגזע המתקיים שנתיים או שלוש שנים ואח"כ הגזע כלה והשורש קיים ומוציא גזע אחר ... כל שאין מתקיים עד אחר ערלה ואחר רבעי ודאי לאו אילן הוא, דאין סברא שיהא אילן שפירותיו לעולם אסורין...

And it seems that the trunk persists for two or three years, and afterwards the trunk shrivels and the root lives on, and sprouts another trunk ... whatever does not continue to exist after the [third]

orlah year, and after the fourth year, is certainly not a tree; since it does not make sense that there would be a tree whose fruits are forever forbidden...

The Chazon Ish believes that it's unreasonable for there to be a plant whose fruits are always forbidden, since after three years it ceases to bear fruit.

Other Acharonim add other parameters to the definition of fruits and vegetables, such as: plants where the quantity and quality of the fruits diminish as the years go by are not considered trees. So too, some define plants with hollow trunks as vegetables.

How should we view these new definitions, not mentioned in the Talmud?

One might say that agronomy is more advanced today, and now we know more about how to define trees and vegetables than in the past. That is to say that the definitions cited by the Tosefta and the Talmud followed the scientific information of the time; and scientific advances brought with them advances in the halachic definitions.

However, it seems more probable that these additional parameters were known also to the Sages of the Tosefta and the Talmud. The definitions cited by the Acharonim are simple, fundamental definitions of vegetables, and the Tosefta and Talmud do not discuss them at all. That is, of course every plant that produces fruit within a year, and plants that do not survive for more than three years are vegetables and not trees; so too, plants whose fruit diminishes in quality and quantity from year to year, and those that have hollow trunks. Rather, the Tosefta and Talmud were only addressing borderline plants, which do not present the traditional characteristics of vegetables, but also do not fully resemble trees. It was in such cases that the Tosefta and Talmud discuss whether they are classified as trees or vegetables.

In practice, many rabbis today disagree about the classification of many plants, including: passionfruit, papaya, goji berry, and babaco. Some accept the definitions provided by the Acharonim, while others do not consider them in their halachic rulings.

Intermediate Plant Classification as Vegetables or Trees

(From Hilchot Ha'aretz, published by Torah VeHa'aretz Institute 5777, p. 133 [Hebrew]).

Fruit/Vegetable	Halachic Class	Reason
Artichoke	Vegetable	Grows back from the root
Babaco	Doubt whether fruit or vegetable	Perennial plant, but its trunk is hollow. Bears fruit within a year.
Banana	Vegetable	Grows back from the root
Blueberries	Tree	Perennial shrub
Eggplant	Vegetable	Does not last for three years. Yield decreases.
Goji berry	Doubt whether fruit or vegetable	Perennial plant but bears fruit within a year.
Hot pepper	Vegetable	Does not last for three years. Yield decreases.
Mint	Vegetable	Grows back from the root.
Papaya	Doubt whether fruit or vegetable	Perennial plant, but its trunk is hollow. Bears fruit within a year.
Passionfruit	Doubt whether fruit or vegetable	Perennial plant but bears fruit within a year.
Pineapples	Vegetable	Grows back from the base of the plant and sometimes from the trunk, produces fruit in its second year, exists for three to four years abroad (Hawaii), and diminishes in quality and quantity from year to year.
Pitaya	Fruit	Perennial
Raspberry / blackberry	Vegetable	Grows back from the root
Sabra	Tree	Perennial
Strawberry	Vegetable	Grows back from the root
Sudanese pepper	Doubt whether fruit or vegetable	Perennial plant but bears fruit within a year.



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פנימי לא להפצה

רח' המלך ג'ורג' 48, ת.ד. 92, ירושלים 910002

48 King George St. P.O.B. 92 Jerusalem 910002

טל +972-2-620-2459

www.wzo.org.il/ruchani