



Tu BiShvat 2022 Text Study

Tu BiShvat Through the Ages

Job 14:7

פי יש לעץ תקנה אם-כרת ועוד יתליף וינקתו לא תחדל:
אם-יזקין בארץ שרשו ובעפר ימות גזעו:
מריח מים יפרח ועשה קציר כמו-נטע:

There is hope for a tree; If it is cut down it will renew itself; Its shoots will not cease. If its roots are old in the earth, and its stump dies in the ground, at the scent of water it will bud and produce branches like a sapling.

Rabbeinu Chananel on Genesis 18:4

קח-נא מעט-מים ורחצו רגליכם והשענו תחת העץ:

Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet *and recline under the tree*.

This teaches that there was only a single tree at that location. Why did God reveal Himself in the shape of a tree? This was because He told him that he would sire a son after having become old, similar to a tree of which it is written that even “an old tree still has hope of producing new branches even if it has been cut down, it will renew itself its shoots will not cease, if its roots are old in the earth and its stump dies in the ground. At the scent of water it will bud and produce branches like a sapling.” (Job 14,7-9)

Questions

1. The second text is using the verse that describes Abraham and Sarah getting the visitors telling them that Sarah will become pregnant at her older age. What is Rabbeinu Chananel saying about getting older?
2. Why do you think they use the older tree text as proof?
3. Have you seen in nature old trees that have died? Have you seen examples when old trees still have young shoots? Do you know why this can happen?
4. How does this text modify your understanding of trees this Tu BiShvat?



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Genesis 1:11-12

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תִּדְשָׂא הָאָרֶץ דְּשֵׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ גֶּרֶע עֵץ פְּרִי עֹשֶׂה פְּרִי לְמִינֵוֹ אֲשֶׁר זֶרְעוֹ-יִבֹ
עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי-כֵן: וַתֵּצֵא הָאָרֶץ דְּשֵׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ גֶּרֶע לְמִינֵהוּ וְעֵץ עֹשֶׂה-פְּרִי אֲשֶׁר זֶרְעוֹ-יִבֹ
לְמִינֵהוּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב:

And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that this was good.

Genesis 2:9

וַיִּצְמַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן-הָאֲדָמָה כָּל-עֵץ נֹחֵמֵד לְמַרְאֵה וְטוֹב לְמֵאֲכָל וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הַגֶּן וְעֵץ
הַדַּעַת טוֹב וָרָע:

And from the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and bad.

In Genesis Chapters 1 and 2, we read of two different accounts of how the creation of the earth occurred. In Chapter 1, things are very orderly, and our text occurs on the Third day. In Chapter 2, we don't read about the days, but trees were the Third thing to be created.

Questions

1. Why do you think trees play a crucial point in our creation stories?
2. At first glance, what role do trees play in each story?
3. Can you think of other roles trees have in Genesis?
4. How does this text modify your understanding of trees this Tu BiShvat?

Psalms 92:13

צְדִיק כְּתֹמָר יִפְרַח כְּאַרְזֵי בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגָּה:

(13) The righteous bloom like a date-palm (gives fruit); they thrive like a cedar (tall and strong) in Lebanon;

Bamidbar Rabbah 3:1

תהלים צב, יג יד: צדיק כְּתֹמָר יִפְרַח וגו' שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית ה' וגו', צְדִיק כְּתֹמָר יִפְרַח, מֶה הַתֹּמָר
הַזֶּה צִלָּה רְחוּק, כִּד מִתֵּן שְׂכָרָן שֶׁל צְדִיקִים רְחוּק מֵהֶם עַד לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא. מֶה הַתֹּמָר הַזֶּה עוֹשֶׂה
תֹּמָרִים רְטוּבִים, נִיקוּלוֹסִין, נוֹבְלוֹת, וְעוֹשֶׂה סוּלִין. כִּד הֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בָּהֶם בְּנֵי תוֹרָה וַיֵּשׁ בָּהֶם
עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ, וַיֵּשׁ בָּהֶם בּוֹרִים



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A righteous person will flourish like a date palm. No part of the date palm is wasted: Its dates are eaten; its young branches are used for ritual blessing [of the lulav on sukkot]; its fronds cover the Sukkah; its fibers are used to make ropes; its leaves are used for sieves; its planed trunks are used for roof beams. So too there are none worthless in Israel: Some are versed in the Bible; others know Mishnah; some are masters of aggadah [storytelling]; others do good deeds; still others promote social equity.

Questions

1. This verse from Psalms is well known and has many melodies. According to the text, name a benefit of being a righteous person.
2. How does the Midrashic text amplify this?
3. Does this text mention how someone not considered righteous can benefit like a tree?
4. Knowing that Midrash claims each and every part of the date palm, how can we be more ardent recyclers and “re-users?”
5. How does this text modify your understanding of trees this Tu BiShvat?

Ta’anit 5b: 11–12

לְמָה הַדָּבָר דּוֹמֶה לְאָדָם שֶׁהָיָה הוֹלֵךְ בְּמִדְבָּר וְהָיָה רָעֵב וְצָמָא וְצָמָא אֵילָן שֶׁפִּירוֹתָיו מְתוֹקִין וְצִלּוֹ נָאֶה וְאַמֶּת הַמַּיִם עוֹבְרֵת תַּחְתָּיו אֶכְלֵ מִפִּירוֹתָיו וְשָׁתָה מִמֵּימָיו וְיָשָׁב בְּצִילוֹ וּכְשֶׁבִיקֵשׁ לִילֵךְ אָמַר אֵילָן אֵילָן בְּמָה אֶבְרַכְךָ אִם אוֹמֵר לֵךְ שִׁיְהוּ פִירוֹתֶיךָ מְתוֹקִין הֲרֵי פִירוֹתֶיךָ מְתוֹקִין שִׁיְהֵא צִילְךָ נָאֶה הֲרֵי צִילְךָ נָאֶה שִׁתְּהֵא אַמֶּת הַמַּיִם עוֹבְרֵת תַּחְתֶּיךָ הֲרֵי אַמֶּת הַמַּיִם עוֹבְרֵת תַּחְתֶּיךָ אֵלֶּא יְהִי רְצוֹן שֶׁכָּל נְטִיעוֹת שְׁנוּטְעִין מִמֶּךָ

...It is comparable to one who was walking through a desert and who was hungry, tired, and thirsty. And he found a tree whose fruits were sweet and whose shade was pleasant, and a stream of water flowed beneath it. He ate from the fruits of the tree, drank from the water in the stream, and sat in the shade of the tree. And when he wished to leave, he said: Tree, O Tree, with what shall I bless you? Shall I say to you, ‘May thy fruits be sweet’? They are sweet already; that your shade be pleasant? It is already pleasant; that a stream of water may flow beneath you? Look, a stream of water flows already beneath you; therefore [I say], ‘May it be God’s will that all your saplings shall be just like you.

Rabbi Yitzchak is giving an example and uses an encounter with a tree to set the scene.

Questions

1. In this story, how do you think a tree can provide sweet fruits, shade, and water in the middle of a desert?
2. Why do you think fruit, water, and shade are listed in this order?
3. What else would you have blessed the tree with in this situation?
4. How does this text modify your understanding of trees this Tu BiShvat?

