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**חבורת שיר חדש Havurah Shir Hadash**

A Jewish Renewal Community in Ashland, Oregon

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## Celebrating the New Year of Trees:

ט"ו בשבט

5776

A Tu B'Shevat Collection  
of Poetry

Edited by Jonah Bornstein  
& David Zaslow



## **Branches and Leaves**

Bruce Barton

Acorns from the pin oak  
roll on the driveway pavement  
while deep-lobed, angle-toothed leaves,  
in red and brown tones, flutter to the ground.

Abetted by the wind, they resemble spiders  
crawling into the garage in defiance of his raking,  
huddling for warmth under Japanese automobiles.

On the trunk of the tree, branches, no longer alive,  
appear as pegs stuck in stationary positions,  
waiting for an occasional brown bear  
to snap them off, or more likely,  
the passing of time to loosen their long hold.

With the appropriate ladder, he could separate them  
from their wooden spines with minimum pain,  
using only his sharpened shears.

## **Spring Morning**

Madeleine Sklar

After the rain our maple tree  
wet black branches  
crimson furled leaves  
chartreuse flowers  
In the temporary amber of raindrops  
We are frozen light.

## **Tu B'shevat, Northern Dreams**

Rachel Goodman

The earth is filled with trees!  
Growing, proliferating, exploding  
Each seedpod sprouts a sapling  
And its roots join tendrils to unite the soil.

In their crevices mice seek warm shelter,  
Birds are swooping, children playing,  
Amid fruit, oh so ripe and ready.  
Yes, this is how winter dreams of spring.

Somewhere  
Is a dry bright land, somewhere dates and figs abound,  
O exotic desert fruit! But seven species promise this:  
spring, summer, sunshine: apples, pears and our grapes too.

So here's that greatest mystery  
The future gestates in the tree.

## **Winds of Morning**

Stephanie K. Nead

Winds of morning  
riding sun's power  
pull hard my deep roots.

Fierce spirits wrestle  
with exultation  
as life sap rises silvery and slick  
from narrow crevices of my rooted source,

feeding  
by intimate union,  
our dance of life.

Caressing my branches,  
song penetrates my earth-bound roots  
proclaiming,  
every cell of me  
has been danced,

quarried in sap's breathing winds,  
until I am whole.  
Nothing more,  
understood  
understanding,

that now  
in this grace  
I rest.

## **Today**

David Zaslow

Today  
is an in-between  
kind of day.  
It's a time  
that's in between  
the seasons  
winter and spring.  
There's a warm sun  
in cold air.  
Everything  
is so clear  
and lovely out.  
Voices fill the wind,  
and you and I  
are in between  
it all.

## Tree Cutting

Jonah Bornstein

Each year the poplar's limbs  
grow barer, as if by shedding  
round and yellow leaves,  
its silver blades will thrust  
more deeply and permanently  
into the Eastern sky.

In truth, age works downwards;  
soon a cherry picker will lift  
a man and saw into  
the upper reaches to collect  
deadwood—feed  
to keep the chipper sharp.

Young ravens will abandon  
the barren towers, sap grown  
ponderous will seep  
dry and brittle as old candy,  
then fall into gravel.

In complaint, squirrels will shake  
their gray tails, squawk like birds  
with sore throats, then cross  
over wires, building new nests  
in the cedar above the mailbox.

A man waits in wind or sun  
for snow and news,  
studying the dying tree for fractures  
and some concrete thing  
to fathom. Yes, he's well aware—  
everything passes, passes away,  
and beauty remains:

Families of deer now nest  
in the plum's ribbed shade, robins  
have replaced starlings,  
skunks, raccoons, and possums  
have abandoned their posts  
along the road, in the fields;

yet from roses green and yellow crowns pop out,  
the cherry shyly disburses red slips.  
Even when the world is cut back  
mid-winter sap begins to rise.

## **HC Tree**

Moshe Ross

Horse chestnut leaves droop  
loosely  
cooling no Nile green queen  
Did you root with Cambrian ferns  
sprawling all sproutable arms?  
Gods did that in Tibet.  
Why did you bother to begin  
my head asks craning back  
to see  
the seed is in the tree



## **Tu B'shavat Winter**

Rebecca Gabriel

Branches as solid,  
Sky as gas,  
The sap below,  
    as liquid –  
This is the matter of trees.

Filigree of twigs  
Shape the sky  
Into pieces of light –

Rain from heaven  
Impregnates the trees  
With spring.

Curled orange is the past  
Curled green, the future,

While white Stars of David  
Drift,  
Witnessing  
This moment...

## **A Poem for Trees**

Deborah Rosenberg

My cousin's wife declared, "He was like a tree!"  
I agreed, but wondered what she meant.  
Since then I have learned much more  
of what it is to be a tree.

Their roots spread wide, but not so deep.  
Their trunks can thicken, split and crack, but still stand strong.  
When pruned correctly,  
they section off the hurt and heal right back.

Trees make air, give homes to insects, mammals, birds.  
They offer coolness, green relief and give us gifts  
of acorns, pinecones, chestnuts.  
Trees ask so little back, just soil, water, and sufficient light.

They seem so solid, permanent and invulnerable,  
But trees decay, grow sick and die,  
Limbs splinter, sprawled and broken,  
Ripped and torn with sharp gaped wounds.

A tree gives life even after death.  
A fallen log's a lovely place to think,  
alive with beetles, ants and worms.  
My cousin's wife was right. My father was a tree.



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