

Activity Name: Tu B'shvat Fruit Seder

Purpose: To celebrate Tu B'shvat with a queer twist

Time: 1 hour

Materials: print-outs of the texts, fruit with a hard outer shell (i.e. pineapples, coconuts, oranges, pistachios), fruit with an inner pit (i.e. dates, cherries, peaches, avocados), fruit with no hard parts (i.e. strawberries, grapes, blueberries, kiwis), white wine or grape juice, red wine or grape juice, plates for the fruit, plates and cups for each participant

Preparation: Set up table(s) with a cup and a plate for each participant. In the center of the table should be plates of various fruits and bottles of wine or grape juice.

Activity: The leader begins by introducing the Tu B'shvat seder and the use of the word "fruit" for queer people. The seder then begins, following the service (below). Invite participants to take turns reading each paragraph.

## Tu B'shvat Fruit Seder

The Kabbalists of 16<sup>th</sup> century Tzfat started a tradition of holding a seder on Tu B'shvat, the birthday of the trees. In this seder they recognized and ate fruits of all varieties, connected by a single aspect: they were the fruits of Israel. Today, while we engage in this same practice, we recognize a different kind of fruit: the Queer kind.

### THE FIRST CUP

We begin our seder with a single cup of white wine. This cup represents the purity and innocence of our earliest memories, of childhood, before we were aware of the conflicts in the world. Think back to your earliest memories. Can you remember such a time? Is there one memory that sticks out? Share it with the people around you.

As we raise our cups of wine, we recite the first blessing of our seder:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch ata Adonai, eloheynu melech ha'olam, boreh p'ri hagafen.

### THE FIRST FRUITS

The first fruits we eat today have a hard outer shell which we must break through to get to the soft, edible middle. These fruits symbolize the hard outer shells we must create for ourselves in order to fend against homophobia and hatred. Just as each fruit is different, so too are our experiences and the shells we must construct. The little boy who is taunted in the schoolyard and the transman who is beat up in the alley face very different realities, but they must fend against the same threat. As we eat this first fruit, reflect upon your own life. What hatred have you experienced, and what is your shell?

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Baruch ata Adonai, eloheynu melech ha'olam, boreh p'ri ha'etz.

### THE SECOND CUP

The second cup is composed of 1/3 red wine with 2/3 white wine. As we age, our innocence is mixed with the knowledge of the real world. As we combat hate, our white wine begins to turn red.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch ata Adonai, eloheynu melech ha'olam, boreh p'ri hagafen.

## THE SECOND FRUITS

The next fruits we eat today may have a soft skin, but each contains a hard inner pit. These fruits symbolize the internal struggle that we inevitably face. As with the first group of fruits, our struggles—and thus, our fruit—varies. We struggle with ourselves when we come out to ourselves. We struggle with the love for our family and friends when take the risk in coming out to them. We struggle with our religious beliefs when our doctrine appears to deny us, and we struggle with society when we try to fit in, somewhere. As we eat this fruit, think about your own life. What struggles have you overcome, and what struggles do you harbor still?

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Baruch ata Adonai, eloheynu melech ha'olam, boreh p'ri ha'etz.

## THE THIRD CUP

As we struggle with life, our innocence diminishes and reality becomes more prominent. Yet, we maintain a bit of innocence which fuels our hope for the better. Thus, our third cup of wine is another mixture: 2/3 red and 1/3 white.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch ata Adonai, eloheynu melech ha'olam, boreh p'ri hagafen.

## THE THIRD FRUITS

The last fruits we eat today are entirely edible, without a hard core or skin. These fruits represent our hopes for the future: a time when we need no hard shell to shield us from homophobia and hatred and a time where being queer does not require any more struggle than being straight does. The diversity of the fruit can represent multiple things: the many paths to this future, the many visions we have for it, and the many things—large and small—that we can do to bring it about. As we eat this fruit, think about what such a future would mean. What can you do to help bring it about?

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

Baruch ata Adonai, eloheynu melech ha'olam, boreh p'ri ha'etz.

## THE FOURTH CUP

The last cup of wine is entirely red. This does not mean we have given up hope; rather, this represents a time when innocence is no longer needed because hatred is no longer the norm. This time has not come yet, but this cup reminds us of what we have to work for.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן

Baruch ata Adonai, eloheynu melech ha'olam, boreh p'ri hagafen.