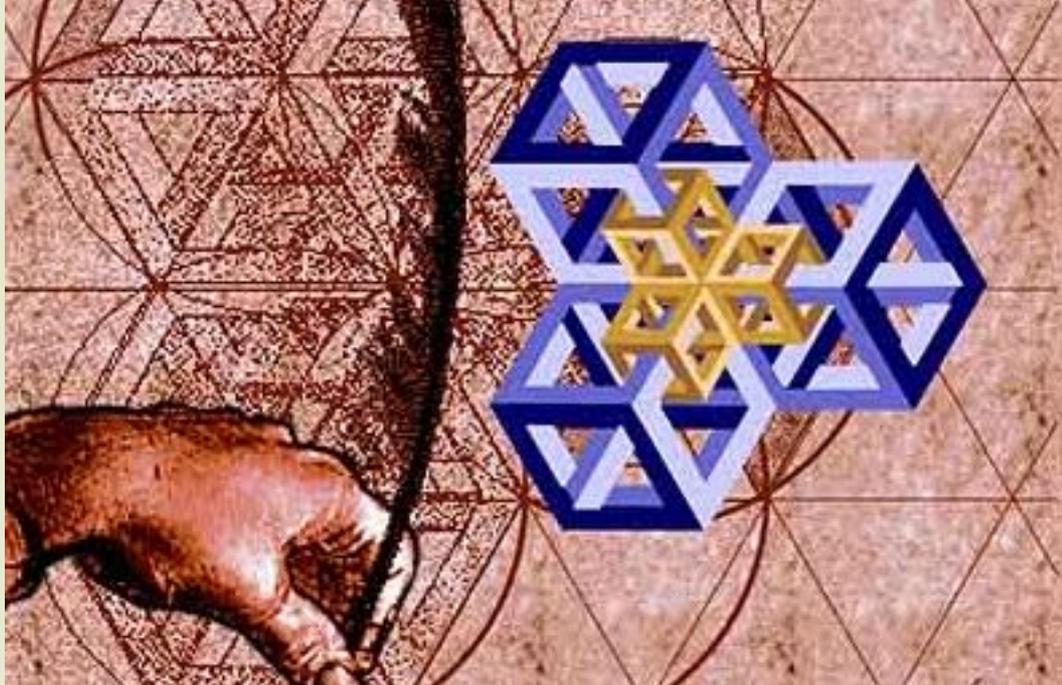


FrameWorks SpiralNotes Series
Tu Beshvat



Son of the Earth

transcribed and edited by Geoffrey Dworkin
based on undergraduate shiur, 2001





ט"ו בשבט

Based on a lecture by R. M. Weinberg (Jerusalem, Israel – 2000)

In the opening of *ראש השנה*, *מסכת ראש השנה* defines two separate new years that are relevant to trees:

באחד בתשרי ראש השנה לשנים ולשמיטין וליובלות לנטיעה ולירקות
באחד בשבט ראש השנה לאילן כדברי בית שמאי בית הלל אומרים
בחמשה עשר בו. (ראש השנה ב.)

On the first of Tishrei, it is the New Year for [counting] years, the Sabbatical, the Jubilee, saplings and vegetables. On the first of Shevat, it is the New Year for trees, according to the school of Shamai while the academy of Hillel says on the fifteenth of [the month].

Curiously, what the *משנה* is indicating is that we need to distinguish between the *נטיעה* and the *אילן*, between the sapling and the tree, a distinction which is so significant that it has practical, legal implications. This is a somewhat unusual distinction because essentially, the sapling is an *אילן*. Recognizing that they would seem to be the same, *רש"י* comments:

ולנטיעה - למנין שני ערלה, ואפילו נטעה באב כלתה שנתה הראשונה
לסוף אלול. (רש"י שם)

לאילן - לענין מעשר, שאין מעשרין פירות האילן שחנטו קודם שבט על
שחנטו לאחר שבט, שבאילן הולך אחר חנטה. (רש"י שם)

For saplings – to count the years of the *Orlah*, to the extent that even if one planted it in Av, the first year [of the young tree] concludes at the end of Elul.

For trees – to determine tithes, for fruit from trees which budded before Shevat is not tithed along with fruit which budded after Shevat, because trees are determined in accordance with the budding.

In other words, when it comes to ערלה, the first of תשרי is used to demarcate age; but, when it comes to the fruit of a mature אילן, שבט is used. That is to say, the difference between a "tree" and a "sapling" is that an אילן is mature enough to produce fruit and the sapling is merely a potential אילן, and because of this difference, the הלכה demands that their developmental cycles be looked at from two distinct lenses. To this end, the גמרא clarifies further:

תנו רבנן אחד הנוטע אחד המבריך ואחד המרכיב ערב שביעית שלשים יום לפני ראש השנה עלתה לו שנה ומותר לקיימן בשביעית... ופירות נטיעה זו אסורין עד חמשה עשר בשבט אם לערלה ערלה ואם לרבעי רבעי (ראש השנה ט:)

Our rabbis taught: Whether one plants, grafts, or inserts [its branch] into the ground to establish a new tree, if [the planting] was done thirty days prior to Rosh HaShanah before a Sabbatical year, one year is credited towards [its Orlah cycle] and it is permissible to sustain [the sapling] during the Sabbatical year; however, the fruits of this tree are forbidden until the fifteenth of Shvat, whether it be of the [restrictions] of Orlah or Neta Revai.

רש"י elaborates on this and explains that even though the sapling's years for ערלה are determined by תשרי, when the tree is four years old, the fruit are still bound by the restrictions of ערלה because the previous "sapling" now falls under the rubric of אילן, whose שבט is in ראש השנה:

ופירות נטיעה זו אסורים כו' - ואף על פי שאמרנו עלתה לו שנה אם חנטו בה פירות לאחר ראש השנה של שנה (שלישית) [רביעית] מיד עדיין אסורין הן עולמית משום ערלה, שאף על פי שראש השנה תשרי לנטיעה חמשה עשר בשבט ראש השנה לאילן, וזו כבר נעשית אילן, לפיכך אין שנתה מתחדשת לצאת מידי ערלה עד חמשה עשר בשבט, אבל משם ולהלן, אם יחנטו בה פירות דין רבעי עליהם לאכול בירושלים... (רש"י שם)

Even though [the Mishnah] told us that a year was counted for [the sapling], if fruits bud after the new year [marking] the fourth year (i.e. Tishrei), they are still forbidden because of Orlah, because even though the first of Tishrei is the new year for saplings, the new year for trees (which this sapling has now transitioned into) is not until the fifteenth of Shevat. Accordingly, its year has not been renewed, in terms of Orlah, until the fifteenth of Shevat. However, from there onward, if fruits bud on it, the law of the fourth year is imposed on them to be eaten in Jerusalem.

What this is saying is somewhat of a contradiction in definition. So that when it comes to defining the age of the sapling itself, we say that by תשרי, if the sapling is in the fourth year of its ערלה cycle, then it has already matured and is no longer defined as a sapling restricted by ערלה; however, now that this sapling is bearing fruit, what's going to define the relationship of the fruit and where they are coming from is an אילן, which is defined by fifteenth of שבט. Consequently, what we have is a tree which is still drawing from its ערלה roots, so to speak, so that even though the נטיעה itself is no longer ערלה, its fruit cannot be eaten until the fifteenth of שבט.

This is a very strange concept because it means that there are two distinct elements of a tree. There is the "sapling" element which defines the tree in terms of itself – how old is the wood. But once it is old enough to bear fruit, then we look at the tree as somehow being a transitional unit between the earth and the thing that it is producing (i.e. fruit) and call it a "tree." Indeed, this transition between when it comes up from the earth through the tree into the fruit has a whole new law. The fruit is not considered to be like a vegetable, which is defined entirely by the earth; rather, it is now considered to be defined by the tree. And the status of "tree" will now explain to us what the relationship is of the fruit to where it is growing from. And so, the גמרא explains:

באחד בשבט ראש השנה לאילן: מאי טעמא אמר רבי אלעזר אמר רבי
אושעיא הואיל ויצאו רוב גשמי שנה ועדיין רוב תקופה מבחוץ מאי קאמר
הכי קאמר אף על פי שרוב תקופה מבחוץ הואיל ויצאו רוב גשמי שנה.
(ראש השנה יד.)

On the first of Shevat is the new year for trees: What is the reason for this? Said R. Elazar in the name of R. Oshiah, since the majority of the year's rain has fallen while the majority of the season has yet to pass. What, exactly, does this mean? Understand it thusly: even though the majority of the season still remains, (it is a significant turning point) since most of the year's rain is generally completed.

Most of the year's rain generally is completed by ט"ו בשבט, therefore, the growing period has evolved in such a way so that the fruits growing from before then are really growing mostly from that (previous) year. But, if they form their bud after that, then they are growing from the next year and they will mature as the next year's rains come.

What we have here is something that is atypical. We do not usually have a bifurcation of definition in terms of legal new years. Typically, in other similar areas of הלכה, such as מעשר בהמה or ירקות, if something comes into being before or after a particular new year, it would be defined very clearly by that new year, as its relationship is direct to the earth. This is not the case here as it is not the earth, directly, that is going to define the tree; rather, it is somehow this additional idea called an "אילן," which is no longer a נטיעה, because it is a fruit bearer, and because of that, it is somehow different. This means that the tree, more than the נטיעה, has the ability to express the earth specifically in terms of its fruit.

Before attempting to understand what the implications of such a concept might be, it is worthwhile to note that this is the only discussion of the holiday within the גמרא. The דנים are basically extensions of מעשר and ערלה – very technical דנים. Yet, there has been a more romanticized development of the holiday in such expressions like the סדר ט"ו בשבט¹, the Chasidic tradition of praying for a good אתרוג, or even tree planting with the Jewish National Fund. So there is some real meaning to this day that has emerged. But beyond these expressions, we see that overall, trees do have some special place throughout חז"ל and the תורה.

For instance, we know that Torah says כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה², that "man is the tree of the field." On the most literal level, this is talking about the prohibition of בל תשחית, wanton destruction of viable goods. So it says, why would you cut down a tree? Is a tree a human that you should want to destroy it simply because you are at war? Thus, the concern that a person should have for not destroying his environment comes halachically specifically from

our source of how to look at trees. In addition to the literal meaning, the גמרא finds in this verse an analogy of עץ השדה to אדם:

אמר ר' יוחנן מאי דכתיב (דברים כ) כי האדם עץ השדה וכי אדם עץ שדה הוא אלא משום דכתיב (דברים כ) כי ממנו תאכל ואותו לא תכרת וכתוב אותו תשחית וכרת הא כיצד אם ת"ח הגון הוא ממנו תאכל ואותו לא תכרת ואם לאו אתו תשחית וכרת. תענית דף ז.

R. Yochanan stated: What is the meaning of the verse, 'For man is the tree of the field' (lit. Are the trees of the field human)? Can man be considered a tree of the field? [Rather, this should be understood homiletically]. Since it is written, 'For you may eat of them, but you may not cut them down' and then it is written, '[the non-fruit-bearing tree], you shall destroy and cut down' [it is clear that some trees may not be cut down while others may]. What is the case? If a scholar is 'descent,' then you may eat from him and do not cut him down; but if he is not, you may destroy him and cut him down. (Ta'anit 7a)

Taking this analogy seriously, midrashic sources stress this direct relationship of trees to man. The מדרש, for example, discusses how the trees and fruit used for the סוכת holiday express, on some level, various personality types:

פרי עץ הדר אלו ישראל מה אתרוג זה יש בו טעם ויש בו ריח כך ישראל יש בהם בני אדם שיש בהם תורה ויש בהם מעשים טובים כפות תמרין אלו ישראל מה התמרה הזו יש בו טעם ואין בו ריח כך הם ישראל יש בהם שיש בהם תורה ואין בהם מעשים טובים וענף עץ עבות אלו ישראל מה הדס יש בו ריח ואין בו טעם כך ישראל יש בהם שיש בהם מעשים טובים ואין בהם תורה וערבי נחל אלו ישראל מה ערבה זו אין בה טעם ואין בה ריח כך הם ישראל יש בהם בני אדם שאין בהם לא תורה ולא מעשים טובים ומה הקב"ה עושה להם לאבדן אי אפשר אלא אמר הקב"ה יוקשרו כולם אגודה אחת והן מכפרין אלו על אלו ואם עשיתם כך אותה שעה אני מתעלה ה"ד (עמוס ט) הבונה בשמים מעלותיו ואימתי הוא מתעלה כשהן עשויין אגודה אחת שנאמר (שם/עמוס ט') ואגודתו על ארץ יסדה לפיכך מזהיר לישראל ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון. (ויקרא רבה (וילנא) פרשה ל)

Just as the citron has a taste and an aroma, so, too, does Israel include individuals who have Torah and good deeds.... The date has a taste but does not have an aroma... [representing those] who have Torah but do not have good deeds.... The myrtle has an aroma but not a taste... [representing those] who have good deeds but do not have Torah.... The willow has no taste and no aroma... [representing those] who do not have Torah and do not have good deeds.... Says God: Let them all bond together in one bundle and atone for each other.

Moreover, we see that both תורה and people are very often compared to elements of trees:

למה נמשלו דברי תורה כעץ שנאמר (משלי ג) עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה
לומר לך מה עץ קטן מדליק את הגדול אף תלמידי חכמים קטנים מחדדים
את הגדולים (תענית ז).

Why are the words of Torah compared to a tree, as it says 'it is a tree of life for those who grab hold of it?' to suggest that just as one small piece of wood can ignite a large piece of wood, so too can less accomplished scholars hone more advanced ones.

צְדִיק כְּתֵמֶר יִפְרַח כְּאֶרֶז בְּלְבָנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה. שְׂתוּלִים בְּבֵית ה' בְּחִצְרוֹת אֱלֹקֵינוּ
יִפְרִיחוּ. (תהלים צב)

The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord, they shall flourish in the courts of our God.

And חז"ל take each variant metaphor seriously:

כתיב (תהלים, צב) צדיק כתמר יפרח, מה התמרה הזו וארוז, אין בהם לא
עקומים ולא סיקוסים כך הצדיקים אין בהם לא עקומים ולא סיקוסים, מה
התמרה וארוז צילן רחוק כך מתן שכרן של צדיקים רחוק, מה התמרה
וארוז לבן מכוון למעלה כך הצדיקים לבן מכוון להקב"ה. (בראשית רבה
וילנא) פרשה מא ד"ה א וינגע ה'

It is written, 'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree...' Just as this date palm and cedar do not have twisted or gnarled trunks, so too the righteous are not twisted or gnarled. Just as the date palm and cedar's shade are high above in the distance, so too is the bestowing of reward for the righteous, which is distant from them until the world to come. Just as the date palm and cedar's hearts are directed upward, so too the hearts of the righteous are directed towards God.

Another example:

תלמידי חכמים נמשלו לתמר: כפות תמרים אלו תלמידי חכמים, שהם
כופים עצמן אלו לאלו ללמוד תורה" (ויקרא רבא ל, י)

Rabbinic scholars are analogous to the date palm: [The verse says], 'Palm fronds,' these are rabbinic scholars who bend themselves over one another to study the Torah.

and rabbinic literature are replete with this idea. But the reason that we're finding all of these metaphors, on a simple level, is because there are two very different elements of life on earth. We are not used to thinking much about it, and this is the place where the תורה brings our attention to it. The different elements are the animal kingdom on the one hand and the vegetable on the other. So that if you are talking about end products, completely different approaches to life, there are two approaches to life that the planet has taken: plant life and animal life. The most advanced element and highest order of plant life development is the tree; the highest order of animal life development is man, אדם.

The primal אדם called himself "אדם" in recognition of his particular connection to earth as *the* representative of the earth. That is, he viewed himself as אדם because אדם means earth,

because he saw himself as the product of the earth, and therefore capable of speaking for the earth. The problem with his approach is that he is not the only product of the earth. There is another, completely different type of product which relates directly to the earth and the sources of its nourishment which man is removed from. And you'll notice that in terms of the aftermath of the episode with the עץ הדעת, this is really what happens to man. He becomes separated from the sources of his natural nourishment and has to go through all of this complex development simply in order to eat. That was the curse – you mess up your natural being, then בְּזַעַת אֶפְיֶךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם,³ essentially you are going to end up with an industrialized society that's going to have to learn to force-feed itself, by forcing the earth to do what it wants it to do.⁴ So that the breakdown in the recognition of אדם to אדמה is the breakdown in the entire relationship man has with the earth. On the other hand, the other expression of the earth in trees seems to be, on the surface, perfectly ok. And yet, despite these differences, the גמרא sees in their common roots a deep interrelationship, particularly in the fruit they both bear:

ת"ר תרנגולת לעשרים ואחד יום וכנגדה באילן לזו כלב לחמשים יום וכנגדו באילן תאנינה חתול לחמשים ושנים יום וכנגדו באילן תות חזיר לששים יום כנגדו באילן תפוח שועל וכל מיני שרצים ששה חדשים וכנגדם באילן תבואה בהמה דקה טהורה לחמשה חדשים וכנגדן באילן גפן בהמה גסה טמאה לשנים עשר חודש וכנגדו באילן דקל טהורה לתשעה חדשים וכנגדה באילן זית ... (בכורות ח.)

Our rabbis taught: The [gestation period] for a chicken is twenty-one days, corresponding to [the developmental period for] the Luz tree. The [gestation period] for a dog is fifty days, corresponding to [the developmental period for] the fig tree. The [gestation period] for a cat is fifty-two days, corresponding to [the developmental period for] the strawberry bush. The [gestation period] for the swine is sixty days, corresponding to [the developmental period for] the apple tree. The [gestation period] for foxes and various insects is six months, corresponding to [the developmental period for] grain. The [gestation period] for a small, ritually pure animal is five months, corresponding to [the developmental period for] the grapevine. The [gestation period] for large, ritually impure animals is twelve months, corresponding to [the developmental period for] the palm tree. The [gestation period] for a large, ritually pure animal is nine months corresponding to the olive tree...

This is a somewhat odd list of correspondences, but clearly stresses that there is a connection between animals and trees, and specifically in terms of the fruit that come of each.

חז"ל take this relationship and similarities so seriously that they talk about trees in ways where they give them personalities. Indeed חז"ל tell stories about trees, stories of love and passion:

מעשה בתמרה אחת שהיתה (באמיתו) [עומדת בחמתן], והיו מרכיבין אותה ולא היתה עושה פירות, אמר להם דקלי אחד תמרה היא רואה מיריחו ומתאווה לה, הלכו והביאו לה ממנה, מיד עשתה פירות, כך ישראל כל תאוותן וצפויין להקב"ה. (מדרש תהלים (בובר) מזמור צב ד"ה [יא] צדיק כתמר)

There once was an incident with a date palm who, while in heat, was not bearing fruit. They attempted to graft branches to her, but she still did not produce fruit. A particular date palm expert said to them, this date palm is obviously longing for another palm in Jerico. So, they brought some pollen over to dust it and sure enough, she produced fruit. So too are Israel, who's desires and gaze are towards the Holy One, blessed is he.

Tree love stories – very curious. Or we have the following story:

כי הוו מפטרי מהדדי אמר ליה: ליברכן מר! - אמר ליה: אמשול לך משל, למה הדבר דומה - לאדם שהיה הולך במדבר והיה רעב ועיף וצמא, ומצא אילן שפירותיו מתוקין וצלו נאה, ואמת המים עוברת תחתיו. אכל מפירותיו, ושתה ממימיו, וישב בצילו. וכשביקש לילך, אמר: אילן אילן, במה אברכך? אם אומר לך שיהו פירותיך מתוקין - הרי פירותיך מתוקין, שיהא צילך נאה - הרי צילך נאה, שתהא אמת המים עוברת תחתך - הרי אמת המים עוברת תחתך. אלא: יהי רצון שכל נטיעות שנוטעין ממך יהיו כמותך. אף אתה, במה אברכך? אם בתורה - הרי תורה, אם בעושר - הרי עושר, אם בבנים - הרי בנים. אלא: יהי רצון שיהיו צאצאי מעיד כמותך. (תענית ה:).

When they were parting from one another, he said, "let the Master bless us." He said to him, "I will propose an analogy to what this situation can be compared to. It is similar to a man who is walking in the wilderness and is hungry, tired and thirsty. Eventually, he finds a tree whose fruit is sweet and shade relieving, with a small pond that flows under it. So, the man eats from its fruits, drinks from its water and rests under the shade. When he is ready to leave, he says, Tree o' tree, how can I bless you? If I should say to you, 'may your fruit be sweet,' behold, your fruit are already sweet. 'That your shade should be pleasing,' behold, your shade is pleasing. 'That there should be a pond of water flowing beneath you,' behold, you already have a pond which flows beneath you. Rather, 'may it be His will that every sapling that is planted from you be just like you.' Similarly, how can I bless you? If regarding Torah, behold, [you have achieved] Torah. If with wealth, behold [your] wealth. If with children, behold [your] children. Rather, 'May it be His will that your descendents be like you.'"

Again, we see חז"ל establishing a relationship between man and trees, where both are capable of individuality, of production, of love, of desire and these similarities are particularly in terms of the fruit coming from each. Speaking of fruit, we have that incredible inquiry of the גמרא asking how is it that we know that מילה is a genital operation:

מניין למילה שבאותו מקום - נאמר כאן ערלתו ונאמר להלן ערלתו מה להלן דבר שעושה פרי, אף כאן דבר שעושה פרי (מסכת שבת קח).

What is the proof-text indicating that circumcision is a genital operation? Through an analogy, it says 'Orlah' here and it uses the term 'Orlah' in that other context. Just as in that context it refers to something which produces fruit, so too here it is referring to that which produces fruit (i.e. offspring).

Again, this is what ט"ו בשבט is about – defining what the relationship of a fruit-bearer is to ערלה. That is, even though the tree in terms of the wood has passed ערלה, ט"ו בשבט is still needed to define the relationship of the fruit being ערלה. So again we see this curious relationship in that it's the way in which אדם is connected to פירות that is the connectedness to אילן, specifically.⁵

Certainly, we look at all of this as metaphorical, but the truth is that there are external realities to אילן. Trees mean a lot to us, they are not just metaphors, they are beings we are concerned about, to the extent that someone who goes around and cuts down perfectly fine fruit trees will not gain anything from the action.⁶ There is something special about a fruit's relationship to the אילן per se, so that we can have חנניא say that my son died only because he cut a tree that was not ready to be cut. Consider the following episode regarding the son of רבי יוסי דמן יוקרת:

יומא חד הוּוּ אגרי ליה אגרי בדברא, נגה להו ולא אייתי להו ריפתא. אמרו ליה לבריה: כפינן! הוּוּ יתבי תותי תאינתא, אמר: תאנה, תאנה! הוציא פירותיך ויאכלו פועלי אבא. אפיקו ואכלו. אדהכי והכי אתא אבוא. אמר להו: לא תינקטו בדעתיכו, דהאי דנגהנא - אמצוה טרחנא, ועד השתא הוא דסגאי. אמרו ליה: רחמנא לישבעך כי היכי דאשבען ברך. - אמר להו: מהיכא? אמרו: הכי והכי הוּוּ מעשה. אמר לו: בני, אתה הטרחת את קונך להוציא תאנה פירותיה שלא בזמנה - יאסף שלא בזמנו. ברתיא מאי היא? הויא ליה ברתא בעלת יופי. יומא חד חזיא להווא גברא דהוּוּ כריא בהוצא וקא חזי לה. אמר לו: מאי האי? - אמר ליה: רבי, אם ללוקח לא זכיתי, לראותה לא אזכה? - אמר לה: בתי, קא מצערת להו לבריינתא - שובי לעפריך, ואל יכשלו ביך בני אדם. הויא ליה ההוא חמרא, כדהוּוּ אגרי לה כל יומא, לאורתא הוּוּ משדרי לה אגרה אגבה ואתיא לבי מרה. ואי טפו לה או בצרי לה - לא אתיא. יומא חד אינשו זוגא דסנדלי עלה, ולא אזלה עד דשקלונה מינה, והדר אזלה. (תענית כג:)

Once, [R. Yose from Yukaras] hired workers to work for him in the field. By the time evening came, he did not bring any bread for [the hired workers] to eat. So [the hired workers] said to his son, 'were hungry.' They were sitting under a fig tree, [so the son] announced, 'Fig tree, Fig tree! Bring forth your fruit so my father's hired workers can have something to eat.' It brought forth [figs and the hired workers] ate. Eventually, his father arrived and said to them, 'don't cast aspersions on me, because the reason I have been delayed until evening is because I was engaged in a mitzvah and now was the only time I could avail myself to come.' [The hired workers] said to him, (relax, don't worry) 'May God satisfy you the way your son has satisfied us!' He (looked around and saw that they were eating figs, so he) said to them, where did he [get you these]? They told him what just happened and he said [to his son], 'my son, you bothered your Maker to cause a fig tree to bring forth fruit when it was not ready, now let that person (i.e. you) die before it is yet his time to do so.'

Again, here it is the special relationship specifically to tree. Indeed the ספרי says,

כי האדם עץ השדה מלמד שחיוו של אדם אינן אלא מן האילן: (ספרי דברים פיסקא רג ד"ה כי האדם)

'For man is the tree of the field' teaches that the life of man is [viable] only because of trees.

The human being lives only because of the tree. And of course, in the most profound sense, that's the truest statement that could be made because it is obviously not only the fruit of trees that we eat which sustains us, but it's the planet we live on, the air that we breathe, that the trees are responsible for. If we did not have the development of an earth with trees, then we simply would not be here. There's no way we can translate the sun's energy into life and there is no way that we can have the oxygen that we need to have to live without trees. The earth, as our environment, is maintained because of trees – they are basic fuel, basic shelter, basic food and air. If that's the case, then it makes a lot of sense that when God originally creates the world, the first thing He does when he has a world is plant trees:

לא נתעסק הקב"ה אלא במטע תחלה הה"ד (בראשית ב) ויטע ה' אלהים
גן בעדן, אף אתם כשנכנסין לארץ לא תתעסקו אלא במטע תחלה הה"ד
וכי תבואו אל הארץ ונטעתם כל עץ מאכל. (ויקרא רבה (וילנא) פרשה
כה ד"ה ג ר"י ב"ר)

*The first thing the Holy One, blessed is He, engaged in at the outset [of Creation] was planting, as it says, 'and he planted a garden in Eden.' So to you, when you enter into the land [of Israel], do not [initially] engage yourselves in anything, save for planting, as it says, 'When you come to the land and you plant all types of trees for food.'*⁷

What emerges is that there is an imperative with regard to trees. You are going to relate to the earth? The only way to do so is to plant trees on it. Experientially, we know how much this is true with the literal rebuilding of ארץ ישראל, where tree planting took on such a central and critical role. Indeed, this is many people's connection and affiliation to ארץ ישראל.⁸ That's why the first thing that נח does when he comes out of the ark is plant a tree.⁹ Likewise, the expression of concern for environment is also in trees – בל תשחית: Don't hurt that which you are dependent on. This injunction is given specifically through trees, though obviously it applies to everything else. Similarly, we find that the definition of the value of ארץ חטטה ושערה וגפן is not in terms of its production. People think that when it says ארץ חטטה ושערה וגפן it refers to its production. But it means that it is an ארץ of this, it's not that it's a useful ארץ because it produces these things. It is an ארץ of this, that's what it's called.¹⁰ Therefore the praise of ארץ ישראל is not that it's a useful ארץ because it has the fruit that are משובחת; rather, its element of being a land is that it is a land of such trees.¹¹ Moreover, our relationship to the beauty of the world is also through אילן, so that in ניסן, when we see a tree during flowering season, we say a blessing. This is the only time we have a special blessing for something that is beautiful. When studying the secrets of תורה, we call that walking through פרדס, an orchard. When אחר misunderstands, he is considered as if he is tearing down the trees within that orchard.

In this, we see that there is a stress in terms of concern for environment. So, it is fitting that on a ט"ו בשבט a person learns to appreciate what the earth can produce so that he can pray for his אתרוג, to have his fruit – to have all these nice things. And appreciation of the earth and all it has to offer is indeed something that comes about specifically through a concern for trees:

בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון נטלו והחזירו על כל אילני גן עדן ואמר לו ראה מעשי כמה נאים ומתוקנים הן וכל מה שבראתי בשבילך בראתי, תן דעתך שלא תקלקל ותחריב את עולמי, שאם קלקלת אין מי שיתקן אחריך. (קהלת רבה (וילנא) פרשה ז ד"ה א [י"ג] ראה)

When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the first man, he took him on a tour of all of the trees in the Garden of Eden and said to him, 'take a look at how beautiful and structurally interrelated everything is – all of this, it's for you!' As such, be very mindful that you do not disrupt and destroy my world, because if you ruin it, there is no one who will come after you to fix it.

What this means is that all morality can boil down to this one reality. Just be careful you don't mess up the world. And what is called "ruining the world"? Answers God: Take a look at all creation and how **נאים ומתוקנים** it all is. Look how everything is interrelated, it's **מתוקן**. You ruin one aspect, the whole thing will be ruined. So be careful. So that means that all of the elements boil down to that one statement – this is what you have to look out for. All **אדם** had to do was **לעבדה ולשמרה** – work it and not mess it up. And his task was simply that he be concerned about this environment and pray for **גשמים**. Essentially, the first thing he has to do is exactly the first thing **הקב"ה** does when he creates the world and which is exactly the first thing we are supposed to be doing, **כל שיח השדה**, planting and developing the world.¹²

The truth, however, is that it is obviously more than just metaphor and environmental concerns, because the fact that all of the **עבודה** of a person in the world is in terms of **כל שיח**: **אדם אין לעבוד את האדמה**, it's the very need for man, it's the need for trees:

וכל שיח השדה טרם יהיה בארץ וכל עשב השדה טרם יצמח כי לא המטיר יקוק אלהים על הארץ ואדם אין לעבד את האדמה: (בראשית פרק ב:ה)

כי לא המטיר - ומה טעם לא המטיר, לפי שאדם אין לעבוד את האדמה ואין מכיר בטובתם של גשמים, וכשבא אדם וידע שהם צורך לעולם התפלל עליהם וירדו, וצמחו האילנות והדשאים: (רש"י)

...No shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground; but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

And why did it not rain? Because Man was not present to tend the earth and recognize the value of rain; however, with the advent of Man and his recognition of the value [of rain] to the world, he prayed [for rain] and it fell and caused all of the trees and greenery to sprout.

And in the deepest sense, this **אדם אין לעבוד את האדמה** is the very way in which we live because our lives consist of what happened to us through trees. That's the **עץ הדעת**. Everything about our life, our mortality, our relationship to evil, the struggle that we have – everything comes from the way in which we related to trees. And not just trees in general, but to one specific element of trees: the relationship of the fruit of the tree to the body of the tree (**טעם העץ כטעם הפרי**). Indeed, this issue of **טעם העץ כטעם הפרי** is again the same problem we have here on **ט"ו בשבט**. That is to say, what is the relationship of the tree itself,

the wood, and the fruit that are going to be presented by this tree. So we say there is a transition over here. And that transitional period from ראש השנה to the following בשבט ט"ו, that is the tree. The transition between having grown into something and producing something. That's the gestation we were talking about, the process that we were talking about. Which means that the essence of the tree is that element of its process. That's why the difference between eating a vegetable, which אדם was so upset about,¹³ and between eating the tree, is the difference between being directly associated with the ground the way that a חמור is and being an אדם, who has a process. Therefore, when God told אדם he'll have the process, just that it'll be painful, אדם said it's ok, as long as I can eat bread. You tell me I have to go through a lot and it's not going to be the way it used to be, that's ok. I'm willing to go to work as long as I'm not going to just live like an animal.

It's very interesting this relationship of טעם העץ כטעם הפרי. The earth was told to bring forth פרי עשה פרי. But the earth didn't do that:

ויאמר אלהים תדשא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע עץ פרי עשה פרי למינהו
אשר זרעו בו על הארץ ויהי כן: ותוצא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע למינהו
ועץ עשה פרי אשר זרעו בו למינהו וירא אלהים כי טוב: (בראשית פרק
א:יא-יב)

עץ פרי - שיהא טעם העץ כטעם הפרי, והיא לא עשתה כן, אלא (פסוק
יב) ותוצא הארץ עץ עושה פרי, ולא העץ פרי, לפיכך כשנתקלל אדם על
עונו נפקדה גם היא על עונה ונתקללה: (רש"י)

And God said: 'Let the earth bring forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree bearing fruit after its kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth.'
And it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing fruit, wherein is the seed thereof, after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

Fruit-tree – it was intended that the taste of the bark would be identical to that of the fruit, but such did not occur for the passage states, 'tree bearing fruit' and not fruity bark. Therefore, when Adam messed up with his own transgression, recollection was made of the tree's transgression and it was also cursed.

What רש"י is suggesting is that the קללה on אדם is identical to that of the עץ so that the עץ's failure to produce טעם הפרי is somehow equivalent to אדם's transgression. To understand this better, consider that only אדם and עץ have the concept of ערלה and that concepts relates to the process of production. Now if the problem in the process of production was that טעם הפרי was no longer טעם הפרי, so that there is this distance, and we know that the קלקל of the עץ was in terms of the mechanisms of production, so that means our own קלקל in evil, the results of eating the עץ הדעת, are in exactly the same area. It's essentially a sexual קלקול. That's why אדם is told to cover over his nakedness, even though he sins with his mouth, as we understand that the nature of the קלקול is in the nature of how it is that we produce. That is why we have ערלה by both, and that's why the תיקון is in terms of ברית and הסרת הערלה, which in the אילן becomes the קדש הלולים לה' – that is the equivalent to the ברית for מילה.

Now, there is a very different approach to this entire discussion regarding the problem of טעם העץ כטעם הפרי. There is a dispute between ר' אלעזר and ר' יהושע about when it is that the world was created.

תניא ר"א אומר מנין שבתשרי נברא העולם שנאמר (בראשית א) ויאמר אלהים תדשא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע עץ פרי עשה פרי למינו איזהו חדש שהארץ מוציאה דשאים ואילן מלא פירות הוי אומר זה תשרי ואותו הפרק זמן רביעה היתה וירדו גשמים וצימחו שנא' (בראשית ב) ואד יעלה מן הארץ ר' יהושע אומר מנין שבניסן נברא העולם שנאמר (בראשית א) ותוצא הארץ דשא עשב מזריע זרע ועץ עושה פרי איזהו חדש שהארץ מליאה דשאים ואילן מוציא פירות הוי אומר זה ניסן ואותו הפרק זמן בהמה וחיה ועוף שמזדווגין זה אצל זה שנאמר (תהילים סה) לבשו כרים הצאן וגו'. (ראש השנה יא.)

R. Elazar says, from where do we know that the world was created in Tishrei? Because it says, 'And God said, let the earth put forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit-tree.' Which is the month in which the earth puts forth grass and the trees are full of fruit? You must say that this is Tishrei. That time was the season of rainfall, and the rain came down and the plants sprouted, as it says, 'And a mist went up from the earth.' R. Joshua says from where do we know that the world was created in Nisan? Because it says 'And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree bearing fruit.' Which is the month in which the earth is full of grass and trees [begin to] produce fruit? You must say that this is Nisan. That time was the period when cattle, beasts and birds copulate with one another, as it says, 'The rams have mounted the sheep.'

So what we have here is completely two different ways of understanding the creation of the world, depending on whether we read the command of עץ פרי עשה פרי or whether we read it as ועץ עושה פרי, which is what it is that the earth actually did. So what does this imply? That God was initially talking about it but it didn't happen until later, and when it did, it occurred differently than he intended? This is strange, considering these statements follow one another in the creation narrative. So, the גמרא asks:

ואידך נמי הא כתיב עץ עושה פרי ההוא לברכה לדורות הוא דכתיב ואידך נמי הא כתיב עץ פרי ההוא כדר' יהושע בן לוי דא"ר יהושע בן לוי כל מעשה בראשית לקומתן נבראו לדעתן נבראו לצביונן נבראו שנא' (בראשית ב) ויכלו השמים והארץ וכל צבאם אל תקרי צבאם אלא צביונם. (ראש השנה יא.)

All creatures of the creation were brought into being with their full stature, their full knowledge and their full beauty, as it says, 'And the heaven and earth were finished, and all of their hosts. Do not read this as 'their hosts' rather as 'their beauty.'

רש"י elaborates on this:

לדעתם - שאלם אם חפצין להבראות, ואמרו הן;

בצביונם - בטעם [כל] אחד ואחד, ובדפוס כל אחד:

With their full knowledge – He asked them whether they wanted to be created and they answered in the affirmative.

With their full beauty – with a reason for each and a unique form.

So what this means is that before the creation took place, every species was asked whether it wanted to be created and what form it would take. So that the tree initially wanted to have bark which tasted like fruit, but when it was actually created, it was lacking this feature.

Now this is a very different way of looking at the whole discussion. So according to this, there is a reason for both פסוקים, and coincidentally enough, we hold like both of these opinions. So that if one is discussing antediluvian elements and the like, תשרי is used; but when discussing elements that have to deal with ראש חדשים and figuring out the seasons, we start from ניסן. Essentially, what this is saying is that there are two completely different ways of looking at the world. One of the two ways looks at the world as a בריאה of potential while the other looks at the world as a בריאה of actuality. And it is not coincidental that this is the problem of עץ פרי עשה פרי. Because when a פרי is grown by a tree, the tree remains unaffected by the fruit. So that the tree will create beautiful fruit, but the tree itself will still taste like a piece of wood. Now, this is something that happens all the time. There are people who are marvelously creative but who are totally impossible to say good morning to, such as the mad genius of Mozart, who created beautiful music, but who himself was somewhat lacking. The גמרא expresses this as follows:

ר' יוחנן רמי כתיב (דברים י) ועשית לך ארון עץ וכתוב (שמות כה) ועשו ארון עצי שטים... אמר רבא כל תלמיד חכם שאין תוכו כברו אינו תלמיד חכם. (יומא עב:)

R. Yochanan pitted two verses against one another: It is written 'And you shall make it an ark of wood.' But then it is written 'And you shall make the ark out of acacia wood, covered in gold inside and out.' Rava says this suggests that any rabbinic scholar whose internal disposition is not in line with his external comportment is not a rabbinic scholar.

The scholar needs to be inside what he is on the outside. So that the things he is thinking and saying have to be consistent with one another. And this is exactly טעם העץ, in that whatever it is that links you to the things that you produce, that is what you are. Notice, by the way, how far most people are from this idea. Most people view their lives in terms of potential. It has nothing to do with themselves. You ask them 'what are you,' they say, 'what do you mean, what am I – obviously I'm a lawyer, can't you see.' But are they a lawyer or are they "lawyering," which are two different things. So now, the person has totally lost touch with himself. The tree (as in that which connects the fruits to the source), the tree in his case doesn't exist, basically. So his whole life consists of doing things and producing things (working on this, working on that). But what happens when you retire? So the person views his life in terms of potential. He identifies his life as the things he could do with his life, not the things that he becomes. So to him, old age is a disaster. The only thing that counts is youth, because youth has potential. Without youth, the career is over. This is the טעם העץ כטעם הפרי problem. The tree does not see itself as being affected by its own creativity. So creativity remains, now, a worship of potential.¹⁴ People could care less what tree a fruit comes from, they walk into the market and get what

they want – there is no connection to the source. This is no different than taking oneself out of the world instead of being the conduit in the world for its growth, its development, its production, which is what the אדם, who is the אדמה, has to be, so that the bird is still growing on his head,¹⁵ so to speak, and the things that are being produced in the world are coming from the earth because they are coming through him. The tremendous difference between a world that is willing to destroy itself, willing to pollute, willing to say to 'God – I don't care,' comes from seeing yourself as not being part of it. As having the attitude that it's just an environment, a stage, and if it is destroyed, we'll go elsewhere. This is a breakdown at a very primal level. It's a breakdown in one's relationship to the אדמה.

What this means is that we are talking about ways one can relate to his life. So if a person only considers his life in terms of "what am I," then he misses the whole point of existence as part of an earth-in-process. That's the realm of עוה"ב. But the whole reason for an earth-in-process is what we identify life as – I, Adam, am the conduit for earth-in-process, whatever it is that can be developed, I'm the one that is going to develop it. As the ספר החינוך explains.

משרשי מצוה זו... ורצה להיות ההשלמה על ידי האדם, ולא בראו שלם מבטן, לרמוז אליו כי כאשר תשולם צורת גופו על ידו, כן בידו להשלים צורת נפשו בהכשר פעולותיו. (ספר החינוך מצוה ב)

Among the reasons for this commandment... [God] desired that the completion be done through the hands of man. And he did not create man complete in the womb so as to hint to [man] that just as the perfection of [man's] body is in his own hand to achieve, so too is it in his hand to complete the form of his soul through the byproducts of his actions.

After creation, where the earth is left, is essentially going nowhere in particular. It's a completely chaotic development. But, now that there is a man, he takes charge of where he is going. That is the point of ברית מילה. He will define; instead of the process of natural selection being a chaotic process, *he* will define the future of genetics, the nature of the environment, the nature of the next generation – he throws himself into the future. This is what he does with ברית מילה, it's removing the concept of ערלה. So in the same way that a tree is supposed to be now the conduit for a process, in which its own שלמות is part of the result of that process, the breakdown between טעם העץ כטעם הפרי is that there is no longer a sense of conduit – the אדם is just a part of the chaotic process, just another animal. This is why שמירת הברית revolves around genes, where it is that your DNA will be going. But of course, in the ultimate sense, it is all creativity.

So it comes out now, that the breakdown now between a world of completion and a world of potential is the source of our problems. In other words, if an אדם wants to only *be*, then he has no relevance to being an אדם at all. If he wants only to worship the potential of what it is that could do, to manipulate things and make them be what he wants them to be, then he has no connection to עוה"ב, because he has no connection to the process, he is just a tool, he himself has become nothing but a vehicle for other things to happen, because *he* is not part of the process. This is the breakdown of טעם העץ כטעם הפרי. So it turns out that the two elements of what creation consists of, of עץ פרי עשה פרי and ועץ עושה פרי, make a great deal of sense. It's only the fact that one is expressed as an imperative while the other as what happens, that a breakdown is implied.

The אריז"ל explains that both of these are true – the world was created during both times. On ראש השנה we say היום הרת עולם, it is the day the world was conceived. Conception takes place before birth. So that the initial conception of the world is a תשרי conception, because the conception takes into consideration the vision of the totality of the final organism. Of course it will be an עץ פרי עשה פרי. But, the process by which that happens has to be a long process, a gestational process. So the actuality of it, the birth of it, is in an immature state in which the fruit have not yet grown, in which the animals are just starting to mature, that gestational period is the six months between תשרי and ניסן. And it happens to be that we celebrate those two worlds in a neat way, because we slice the year between ניסן and תשרי, פסח and סוכת. So we really have two different visions of a world to which we relate. That's why our תשרי world is in a sense a completion world, where we speak about the סוכה where we talk about עוה"ב and the עורו של לויטן, that's the completion. It's taking the concept and seeing the end of the concept. ניסן, on the other hand, is just the opposite. We go out and make blessings on what it is that we're going to be doing, the beautiful things that are starting to blossom – spring fever – the potential is starting to boil one's blood. We feel that we have got to get out there. לבשו כרים הצאן.

Now a very interesting thing is that there is another intriguing split. Six months apart are ט"ו בשבט and ט"ו באב. Now it just so happens that ט"ו בשבט is forty days before the creation of the world in ניסן and ט"ו באב is forty days before the creation of the world in תשרי.¹⁶ Forty days is the time when a person is summoned to creation:

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: ארבעים יום קודם יצירת הולד, בת קול יוצאת
ואומרת: בת פלוני לפלוני (סוטה ב.)

So that the difference in time between the conception, the vision, and where it's going to actually, physically materialize, so that when God asks, would you like to be created, that takes place forty days before. In other words, the appreciation in our own minds of the concept of ourselves as an entity, and the acceptance of the process that will make us be ourselves, that was why Creation was asked to be created. So forty days before ניסן is when עלייתה במחשבה, when God himself considered creating the world, this is ט"ו בשבט; forty days before a world of potential is the time in which an individual accepts do you or don't you. But the acceptance of "do you" means that I am willing first of all to see myself in the vision of the concept, of what I have to be, while at the same time I'm accepting the creation of a self that is going to require a miserable process to get there. But I recognize that that process has got to be part of what I want to be. So that the לקומתן נבראו לדעתן נבראו לצביונן are all interrelated. We need to have your acceptance of the fact this is what you want to be and are willing to go through the process to make yourself that, if so, then we're willing to continue with the world.

So this means that ט"ו בשבט essentially is a time when a person has an opportunity to accept that he is willing to engage in whatever it is that he is engaging in, with the understanding that it is meant to be that which makes him himself. So that the focus is not on the manipulation or the achievement that is measured externally, not on the success, but on one's self. What do you want to be. So the question of בריאה itself, what do you want to be, and that acceptance of what you want to be, becomes now the process of your life, so that there is no longer a contradiction between עץ פרי עשה פרי and ועץ עושה פרי, in that you solve the problem of evil, essentially.¹⁷ And this is not a matter of the theoretical, because everything that a person does is, on some level, another step of what it is a person

is going to be. So if a person leads a life where he is totally isolated unto himself, he's not part of the earth any longer, there is no bird on him, where he just talks to people through a persona, everything he is doing is because this is what you do, this is the way you become successful, this is the way to do things with life, then he is wasting away as an avatar, because you don't *do* things with your life, life is meant to be lived. The journey is part of what it is that you are. Otherwise, it is a horrific waste. And this all boils down to one's connection to the earth, the way one looks at trees, fruit; the way that one understands what it is that he is doing when he is biting into something. The difference between the joy and recognition of 'this is where I come from and this is what I am and that the universe is me,' and a disconnection from the environment, where it is just a place to *do things*, is the difference between making a choice to improve or destroy the world.



This transcription is based upon Rav Matis Weinberg's discussion of the topic to undergraduates in Jerusalem, Israel, 5760 (2000)

endnotes:

¹ Rooted in קבלה, the סדר goes through eating different levels of fruit which have connections to good and evil, represented by such things as fruits with hard shells, edible peels, inedible peels and all the while discussing what is unique about this particular tree and particular fruit. Typically, before eating each specific fruit, its source in the תורה is referenced and recited.

² דברים כ"ט

³ Consider the need to be connected to fruit:

בו ביום נגזרו על אדם ג' גזרות שנאמר ולאדם אמר כי שמעת לקול אשתך וגו' ארורה האדמה בעבורך בעצבון תאכלנה [וגו'] וקוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך ואכלת את עשב השדה (בראשית ג' י"ז ו"ח) כיון ששמע אדה"ר שאמר לו הקב"ה ואכלת את עשב השדה מיד נודעו אבריו אמר לפניו רבש"ע אני ובהמתי נאכל באבוס אחד אמר לו הקב"ה הואיל ונודעו אבריו בזיעת אפיו תאכל לחם (שם). (אבות דרבי נתן נוסחא א פרק א ד"ה בו ביום)

⁴ The connection of אדם to the earth even has legal implications as well. Because suppose you want to know whether there is a need of הקן שילוח when a person has a bird's nest resting on his head. It is still called אדמה. So that man is a direct conduit to the earth. He is not considered to be a הפסק to the earth. So it has the דין of a bird's nest:

מצא קן בשמים דכתיב (משלי ל) דרך נשר בשמים הכי נמי דמיחייב בשילוח הקן דרך נשר איקרי דרך סתמא לא איקרי אמרי ליה פפונאי לרב מתנה מצא קן בראשו של אדם מהו אמר (שמואל ב טו) ואדמה על ראשו (חולין קלט:).

⁵ Indeed, fructose ("fruit sugar") is found only one place in the human body, semen – the same פרי relationship to ערלה.

⁶ See מכות כב:

⁷ Note that this proof-text from ויקרא יט:כג is in the context of both ערלה and fruit-bearing trees.

⁸ What emerges from this is a correlation where on the macro level there is this notion of a world needing trees and on the microcosmic level ישראל ארץ also requiring trees. Indeed, there is a מדרש that says that reason why "בני" wandered in the wilderness for forty years was because when the Canaanites heard that בני" were coming, they burned all trees to discourage them from entering. Since God didn't want בני" to be dissuaded, the 40 years were utilized to allow trees to be replanted and grow.

Also consider that the מקדש itself is called יער הלבנון:

אמר רב זוטרא בר טוביה: למה נקרא שמו יער דכתיב +מלכים א' י+ בית יער הלבנון - לומר לך: מה יער מבלבל אף בית המקדש מבלבל. דאמר רב הושעיא: בשעה שבנה שלמה בית המקדש נטע בו כל מיני מגדים של זהב, והיו מוציין פירות בזמניהן, וכיון שהרוח מנשבת בהן היו נושרין פירותיהן, שנאמר +תהלים עב+ ירעש כלבנון פריו, ומהו היתה פרנסה לכהונה. וכיון שנכנסו גוים להיכל - יבשו, שנאמר +נחום א+ ופרח לבנון אמלל, ועתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא להחזירה לנו שנאמר +ישעיהו לה+ פרח תפרח ותגל אף גילת ורנן כבוד הלבנון נתן - לה. (מסכת יומא דף לט:)

⁹ ויהל נח איש האדמה ויטע כרם (בראשית ט:כ)

¹⁰ Indeed the גמרא suggests that the heralding of the משיח himself is through an abundance of greenery:

ואמר רבי אבא: אין לך קץ מגולה מזה, שנאמר (יחזקאל ל"ו) ואתם הרי ישראל ענפכם תתנו ופריכם תשאו לעמי ישראל וגו'. (סנהדרין צה.)

¹¹ The concept of אֶרֶץ הַטֶּהוֹ וְשֵׁעָרָה also alludes to trees, as the גמרא indicates that wheat itself had once been in a tree form, with an opinion even suggesting that the עץ הדעת itself was wheat.

¹² And that שיח השדה is specifically in terms of trees, as the גמרא says, the trees whisper to each other, talk to each other:

וכל שיח השדה, כל האילנות כאילו משיחין אלו עם אלו, כל האילנות כאלו משיחין עם הבריות, כל האילנות להנאתן של בריות נבראו, מעשה בא' שבצר את כרמו ולן בתוכו ובאת הרוח ופגעתו, כל שיחתן של בריות אינה אלא על הארץ עבדת ארעא לא עבדת וכל תפלתן של בריות אינה אלא על הארץ, מרי תעביד ארעא מרי תצליח ארעא, כל תפלתן של ישראל אינו אלא על ב"ה, מרי יתבני בית מקדשא מרי מתי יתבני בית מקדשא. (בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשה יג ד"ה ב וכל שיח)

¹³ See note number 3.

¹⁴ This basically is what the Golden Calf was and why it reintroduced mortality into the world, the same way the עץ הדעת does. The Golden Calf was the worship of potential.

¹⁵ See note number 4.

¹⁶ More specifically, the forty days concludes at בכ"ה באדר, the beginning of the 7 days of creation, which complete on א' ניסן.

¹⁷ This is why the סדר ט"ו בשבט talks about fruit in terms of theory connection to evil – קליפה – because of the question of טעם העץ כטעם הפרי.