

# *Trees of Life: Hasidic Tales for T”U Bi-Shvat*

## *The Song of the Grasses*

(By Naomi Shemer, adapted from Rebbe Nachman’s teaching, translation by George Jakubovits)

Know that every shepherd has a special melody, all his own.  
Know that every blade of grass has a special song, all its own.  
And from the song of the grasses, the shepherd makes his song.

How beautiful, how beautiful and pleasant it is when one hears the song of the grasses!  
It is very good to pray among them, and serve God with joy.  
From the song of the grasses, the heart is filled, and yearns.

And when the poem causes the heart to fill  
and to yearn to the Land of Israel  
a great light is drawn and goes  
from the Land’s holiness upon it.  
And from the poem of the grasses  
a tune of the heart is made.



## **The Growing Tree** (Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*)

Rabbi Uri taught: “Man is like a tree. If you stand in front of a tree and watch it incessantly to see how it grows and to see how much it has grown, you will see nothing at all. But tend to it at all times, prune the runners, and keep the vermin from it, and—all in good time—it will come into its growth. It is the same with man: all that is necessary is for him to overcome his obstacles, and he will thrive and grow. But it is not right to examine him every hour to see how much has been added to his growth.”

## **The Leaf** (Derived from a story at *chabad.org*)

Told by Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, the sixth ChaBaD rebbe: It was the summer of 1896, and Father and I were strolling in the fields of Balivka, a hamlet near Lubavitch. The grain was near to ripening, and the wheat and grass swayed gently in the breeze.

Said Father to me: “See Godliness! Every movement of each stalk and grass was included in G-d’s primordial thought of creation, in G-d’s all-embracing vision of history, and is guided by divine providence toward a Godly purpose.”

Walking, we entered the forest. Engrossed in what I had heard, excited by the gentleness and seriousness of Father’s words, I absentmindedly tore a leaf off a passing tree. Holding it a while in my hands, I continued my thoughtful pacing, occasionally tearing small pieces of leaf and casting them to the winds.

“The Holy Ari,” said Father to me, “says that not only is every leaf on a tree a creation invested with divine life, created for a specific purpose within G-d’s intent in creation, but also that within each and every leaf there is a spark of a soul that has descended to earth to find its correction and fulfillment.

“The Talmud,” Father continued, “rules that ‘a man is always responsible for his actions, whether awake or asleep.’ The difference between wakefulness and sleep is in the inner faculties of man, his intellect and emotions. The external faculties function equally well in sleep; only the inner faculties are confused. So, dreams present us with contradictory truths. A waking man sees the real world; a sleeping man does not. This is the deeper significance of wakefulness and sleep: when one is awake one sees divinity; when asleep, one does not.

“Nevertheless, our sages maintain that man is always responsible for his actions, whether awake or asleep (*Bava Kama* 3b-4a). Only this moment we have spoken of divine providence, and unthinkingly you tore off a leaf, played with it in your hands, twisting and squashing and tearing it to pieces, throwing it in all directions.

“Just this moment we have spoken of divine providence, and unthinkingly you tore off a leaf, played with it in your hands, twisting and squashing and tearing it to pieces, throwing it in all directions.

“How can one be so callous towards a creation of G-d? This leaf was created by the Almighty towards a specific purpose, and is imbued with a divine life-force. It has a body, and it has its life. In what way is the ‘I’ of this leaf inferior to yours?”

***Sichot MoHaRaN #163*** (derived from a teaching at [www.breslov.org](http://www.breslov.org))

One of Rebbe Nachman’s followers said: “One summer day, the Rebbe *davened* early and suggested that we take a stroll. We left the city and found ourselves walking in a grassy meadow.

The Rebbe spoke: “If people could only merit to hear the song of the herbs and the grass. Each blade sings out to God without any ulterior motive, not expecting any reward. It is most wonderful to hear their song and serve God in their midst. *Es iz zeir gut frum tzu zein tzuvishen zei*. It is very good to worship among them!”

