

Eitz Khayim Hi

עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא,
לְמַחְזִיקִים בָּהּ,
וְתִמְכִּיהָ מֵאֶשֶׁר.
דְּרָכֶיהָ דְרָכֵי נַעַם,
וְכֹל נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם.*

Eitz kha-yim hi
la-ma-kha-zi-kim ba,
v'to-m'khe-kha m'u-shar.
D'ra-khe-ha dar-khei no-am,
v'khol n'ti-vo-te-ha sha-lom.

You flower on
ancient tree,
shading paths beyond those we know.
And your strength renews all life,
binding heaven to earth and sea.*

A tree of life it is to those who take hold of it, and those who support it are happy. Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.

D'rash

A tree of life it is to those who take hold of it—If we will make the Torah our own, it will become the tree of our life—giving us deep roots in our history and heritage, a solid trunk of wisdom on which to stand, a surfeit of branches of learning to guide us through life's challenges, and an explosion of simkha blossoms (joyful celebrations) that will beautify our days with meaning and purpose. **And those who support it are happy**—As with all of life, there is greater joy in giving than receiving; thus our greatest happiness will derive from our efforts to bring the blessings of Torah into the lives of others. **Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.** If we will but join together with others, proclaiming the vision of Torah, each of us walking the path in our own unique way within its bounds, we shall achieve the deepest happiness possible.

Iyun Tefilla

THE WAY BACK

When Eve,
The mother of all,
Noticed the tree of life
Before she took matters
Into her own hands,
Did she think, like us:
I want to live forever?
Did she then regret
Having to leave paradise,
The only home

She'd ever known,
And find it harsh
That God placed
A flaming sword
That turns every which way
And a pair of angels
To guard the tree?
But could they not
Just as easily
Have been waiting
There for us
All this time,
Guarding the way
Back?
Some say,
If only we had
A trail of breadcrumbs
To show us the way.
I say we do.
I say when God blew
The breath of life into us
The letters of the Torah
Were included.

* Interpretive translation of Proverbs 3:18, 17.

Go to <http://www.gatherthepeople.org> for more congregational development and organizing tools.

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