

## Eitz Khayim Hi

עֵץ חַיִּים הִיא,  
לְמַחְזִיקִים בָּהּ,  
וְתַמְכִּיהָ 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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