

Tu B'Shevat

Fruit For Thought for Tu B'Shevat, the New Year for Trees

Tu B'Shevat, the 15th of Shevat on the Jewish calendar, is the day that marks the beginning of a "New Year for Trees." This is the season in which the earliest-blooming trees in the Land of Israel emerge from their winter sleep and begin a new fruit-bearing cycle.



Legally, the "New Year for Trees" relates to the various tithes that must be separated from produce grown in the Holy Land. These tithes differ from year to year in the seven-year Shemittah cycle; the point at which a budding fruit is considered to belong to the next year of the cycle is the 15th of Shevat.

We mark the day of *Tu B'Shevat* by eating fruit, particularly from the kinds that are singled out by the Torah in its praise of the bounty of the Holy Land: grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates. On this day we remember that "Man is a tree of the field" (Deuteronomy 20:19) and reflect on the lessons we can derive from our botanical analogue.

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3264/jewish/Tu-BShevat.htm

Tu B'Shevat: What and How

Farming Religiously

By [Naftali Silberberg](#)



The 15th of Shevat is the New Year for Trees, known as *Tu b'Shvat*.

According to Biblical law, there is a seven year agricultural cycle, concluding with the Sabbatical year. When the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem, on years one, two, four and five of this cycle, farmers were required to separate a tenth of their produce and eat it in Jerusalem. This tithe is called Maaser Sheni, the Second Tithe, because it is in addition to the (two percent which must be given to the Kohain, and the) ten percent which is given to the Levite. On the third and sixth years of the cycle, instead of the owners eating the Maaser Sheni in Jerusalem, they gave this second tithe to the poor, who were permitted to consume it wherever they wished.

It takes approximately four months for the rains of the new year to saturate the soil and trees, and produce fruit[On the Sabbatical year, no tithes are separated. All produce which grows during this year is ownerless and free for anyone to take.]

It was therefore of vital importance to ascertain when the new year started for produce. Our Rabbis established that a fruit which blossomed before the 15th of Shevat is produce of the previous year. If it blossomed afterwards, it is produce of the "new year." [By comparison, grains, vegetables, and legumes have the same New Year as humans, the 1st of Tishrei.] Why is this so? In the Mediterranean region, the rainy season begins with the festival of Sukkot. It takes approximately four months (from Sukkot, the 15th of Tishrei, until the 15th of Shevat) for the rains of the new year to saturate the soil and trees, and produce fruit. All fruit which blossom beforehand are a product of the rains of the previous year, and are tithed together with the crops of the previous year.

Although this day is Rosh Hashanah for *trees*, we attach special significance to this holiday because "Man is [compared to] the tree of the field" (Deuteronomy 20:19). Through cultivating strong roots – faith and commitment to G-d – we produce many fruits—Torah and Mitzvot.

Observances and Customs

On this day it is customary to partake of the fruit with which the Holy Land is praised (Deuteronomy 8:8): olives, dates, grapes, figs and pomegranates. If tasting any of these fruit for the first time this season, remember to recite the *Shehecheyanu* blessing. (A blessing recited on joyous occasions, thanking G-d for "sustaining us and enabling us to reach this occasion." This blessing is recited before the standard "*Ha'etz*" blessing recited on fruit.)

Due to the festive nature of the day, we omit the *Tachanun* sections (petitions for forgiveness and confession) from the prayers.

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/468738/jewish/Tu-BShevat-What-and-How.htm

Tu B'Shevat Customs

By [Eliezer Wenger](#)



On the 15th of Shevat on the Jewish calendar we celebrate *Rosh HaShonah L'Ilanot*, the "New Year for the Trees." Some customs for this day:

- It is customary to increase in the amount of fruits one eats on the 15th of Shevat, in order to praise G-d who created all these species of fruits.

The blessing recited on fruit is:

(In Hebrew:)

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
בוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

(Transliteration:)

*Baruch atah A-donoy, Elo-heinu Melech
Ha'Olam borei pri ha-aitz.*

(Translation:)

Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

- In particular, one should include among the fruits one eats on this day the species of fruit which the land of Israel is praised for: **grapes, olives, dates, figs** and **pomegranates**.¹ If one eats a sufficient amount of fruits of these fruits, one recites the **special after blessing** *Al Ha'aretz ve'al HaPeorot*.

- One should make an effort to eat at least one fruit which one has not eaten that entire season, and would require the blessing of *Shehecheyanu*. When eating such a fruit, the *Shehecheyanu* should be said prior to reciting the blessing of "*Haetz*." If he has already partaken of other fruits (at that particular sitting) than he only needs to say the *Shehecheyanu* upon eating the new fruit.

The blessing of *Shehecheyanu*:

Transliteration: *Ba-ruch A-tah A-do-nai E-lo-he-nu Me-lech Ha-olam She-heche-ya-nu Ve-ki-yi-ma-nu Ve-higi-a-nu Liz-man Ha-zeh.*

Translation: Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

- Many also have a custom of eating carob on this day.² There is yet another custom which many have and that is to eat the *Etrog*, either in the form of preserves, sugared slices, etc.³
- It was the custom of the famed Kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria ("Arizal") to eat 15 varieties of fruits on the 15th of Shevat.
- On this day *Tachnun* is omitted from the *Shacharit* and *Mincha* (morning and afternoon) prayers as well as from the *Mincha* prayer on the afternoon beforehand.

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/260798/jewish/Tu-BShevat-Customs.htm

Tu B'Shevat Q & A

By [Moshe Bogomilsky](#)



The first day of [the Hebrew month] Shevat is the New Year for the tree according to the House of Shamai. The House of Hillel says it is on the 15th of Shevat. (Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 2a)

Question: Why is it necessary for us to know the date of the "New Year for Trees"?

Answer: The Hebrew calendar is set up according to a seven year cycle. The seventh year is known as the year of *shemittah*, during which the land is left idle and no work is done in the fields. In the first, second, fourth and fifth year of the six year cycle, the farmers have to set aside "first tithe" (*ma'aseir rishon*) for the Levite tribe, and "second tithe" (*ma'aseir sheini*) is brought to Jerusalem to be eaten. On the third and sixth

year, "tithe for the poor" (*ma'aseir ani*) is given in lieu of the second tithe.

Tithes must be given from the fruits which grow on the tree each year. One cannot give from produce of the current year for another year. For purposes of tithe from trees, the new year is calculated from the time when the fruits of the trees begin to blossom. Tu BeShevat is the cut-off date between one year and the next. In the year which follows the shemittah year, fruits which blossomed before Tu BeShevat belong to the first year of the cycle, and fruits which blossom after Tu BeShevat belong to the second year of the cycle.

Question: What is the basis of the dispute between the House of Shamai and the House of Hillel regarding the date of the New Year for Trees?

Answer: The Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 16a) states that on the festival of Sukkot (celebrated on the 15th of the Hebrew month of Tishrei) the world is judged in regard to water. This does not contradict to the opinion in the Talmud that on Rosh Hashanah -- i.e., the 1st of Tishrei -- the entire world is judged, because the judgment on Rosh Hashanah is general judgment that only creates the potential for the water to be given. The detailed practical determination concerning the water takes place on Sukkot.

According to the Jerusalem Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 1:2), the significance of the New Year for trees is that until then all trees live on the water of the previous year. After the

first day of the month of Shevat the trees derive their life source from the water of the new year. Thus, the effect of the new water occurs four months after the period of judgment.

Hence, the dispute between the schools of Shammai and Hillel concerns the significance of the potential (*b'koach*) and the actual (*b'poel*). The House of Shammai is of the opinion that the potential is of primary significance. Consequently, according to Shammai, since in potential the judgment of water took place on the first of the month of Tishrei, four months later we celebrate the New Year for the trees, when the potential begins for them to derive nurture from the waters which were included in the judgment of the entire world four months ago.

However, according to the House of Hillel, priority is given to that which is actual. Thus, the actual decision on water takes place on the fifteenth of Tishrei. Therefore, four months later, on the fifteenth of Shevat, the trees start living from the new waters.

Question: The Torah states "Man is like the tree of the field" (Deuteronomy 20:19). The Jewish people have often been compared to different trees. What lesson can man learn from trees?

Answer: Trees teach us the following:

A tree is planted by first putting a seed in the ground. Afterwards, it is necessary to frequently water the ground and remove the weeds. In each and every Jew, G-d planted a Divine seed -- his soul. It is man's obligation to water it with Torah study and protect it by weeding out bad friends and influences.

A healthy tree continues to grow and grow. A healthy Jew must continuously grow spiritually. This is accomplished through studying Torah and performing its precepts.

To ensure that a young tree will grow straight, it is tied to two supports, one on each side. To ensure that a young child grows beautifully, the parents must always be at his side and constantly supervise him.

The strength of the tree depends on how well it is rooted in the ground. The root of the Jew is his belief.

The beauty of a tree is the fruit it produces. mitzvot and good deeds are man's fruits.

http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/356805/jewish/Tu-BShevat-Q-A.htm