

# Tu B'shevat

**Tu B'shevat**, meaning the 15th of Shevat, marks the new year of Israel's trees and, this year, begins on the eve of Wednesday, January 15. By the middle of the Hebrew month of Shevat, the rains that began during

Sukkot have absorbed into the soil and we see new growth in the form of fruits. It is a Jewish custom to eat more fruits than usual in an effort to give thanks to G-d for all forms of fruits created.



## Blessings:

Like bread, wine, candles and many Jewish practices, tree fruits have their own *bracha*, blessing, that is said before eating.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי העץ

*Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu melekh ha'olam borei pri ha-aitz.*

Blessed are You, Adonai Eloheinu, Sovereign of the universe who creates the fruit of the tree.

In celebration of the new year for the trees, we make an effort to eat at least one new fruit that we have not yet eaten this season. In doing so, we have the opportunity to say the *Shehecheyanu* blessing, said only when we mark a special occasion for the first time.

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם  
שהחיינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה

*Barukh atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melekh ha'olam  
shehecheyanu v'kiyimanu v'higi'anu laz'man hazeh.*

Blessed are you, Adonai, Eloheinu, Sovereign of the universe  
who has kept us alive, sustained us and enabled us to reach this season.

Celebrating Tu B'shevat and the new fruits that bloom on trees is an important reminder that not all people in our communities have equal access to fresh fruits and vegetables. While most of the trees in our cities are not fruit-bearing, we can still use some of the land that we inhabit to cultivate and harvest healthful fruits and vegetables in urban gardens. For individuals in need or who have little access to affordable groceries, creating even small gardens might be the only accessible way to bring fruits and vegetables to their table.

**The next time you bite into a piece of fruit, ask yourself the following questions:**

- 1** How far did you have to travel to buy the piece of fruit?
- 2** Are there many gardens or markets in your community that are easily accessible and affordable for those in need? If not, how do people secure fruits and vegetables?
- 3** Is there a local community garden that might benefit from some volunteer support to provide more access to those in need?
- 4** What else can you do to support wider access to fresh fruits and vegetables?

