

More About Tu BiSh'vat

Tu BiSh'vat is a holiday also known as the New Year for Trees. It takes place on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Shevat. This year, the holiday will start the evening of Friday, February 10, 2017, and will end the evening of Saturday, February 11, 2107. The word "Tu" is the number 15 in Hebrew Gematria (a Kabbalistic method of interpreting the Hebrew scriptures by computing the numerical value of words, based on those of their constituent letters), as if you were to call the Fourth of July "IV July" (IV being 4 in Roman numerals). The Hebrew alphabet uses letters as numbers and which explains why the number 15 is written this way.

Judaism has several different new year holidays, but Tu BiSh'vat is the new year for the purpose of calculating the age of trees for tithing. In Leviticus 19: 23-25, it states that fruit from trees may not be eaten during the first three years; the fourth year's fruit is for the Lord, and in the fifth year, the fruit can be eaten. Each tree is considered to have aged one year as of Tu BiSh'vat, so if a tree is planted on Shevat 14, it begins its second year the next day. If a tree is planted two days later, on Shevat 16, it does not reach its second year until the next Tu BiSh'vat. In Israel, people, and especially children, are planting trees. It's a custom to eat fruits typical to Israel on that day. i.e. oranges, figs, dates, grapes, pomegranate, olive, & nuts. Some Jewish communities are having "Tu BiSh'vat Seder." The Tu BiSh'vat Seder, full of imagery and symbolism, is divided into four sections that represent the four seasons.