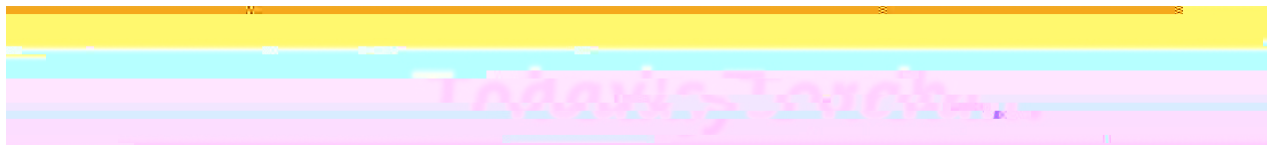


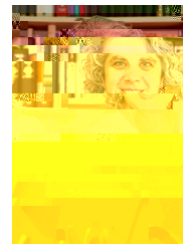
*Note to Readers: In addition to providing holiday inspiration, we are pleased to offer you continuing access to a vast library of Ziegler Torah commentaries on each weekly Parashah throughout the entire Torah cycle. To delve deep, please [click here](#).*



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## Produce and Potential

Tu Bishvat (the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month of Shevat) is first mentioned in early rabbinic tradition, as a “new year” for trees – or more accurately, fruit and nut-bearing trees. In fact, according to the Mishnah, in Rosh haShanah 1:1, trees may have two separate new years. One of these is on the first of Tishrei to mark the age of the tree (that is, no matter what date a tree was planted or replanted, it becomes a year older on the first of Tishrei; this is important because according to Lev. 19:23-25 one may not eat of the fruit of a newly planted tree for four years). The other marks when a new year begins for tithing the produce of the tree – that is, it is

a kind of rabbinic “tax” year. Fruit that was grown before this date was included in the prior year’s yield for the purpose of tithing, while all fruit that emerged after became part of the tithe of the coming year.

There is a dispute about the date of this new year – the House of Shammai date it to the first of Shevat, while the House of Hillel designates the fifteenth. Neither of the Talmuds, when they comment (very briefly!) on this mishnah, take up directly the question of which House is correct, but since in debates between these two schools, Jewish law/practice almost always follows the House of Hillel, it came to be accepted that the date would be the fifteenth. What both Talmuds (Yerushalmi RH 1:2, 57a; Babylonian Talmud Rosh haShanah 14a) do attempt to answer is why the date should be in this month at all, on either the first or the fifteenth. This time of year is still during the rainy season the Land of Israel (which typically occurs from shortly after Sukkot until about Passover), and while it still feels very much like winter. Why now?

One answer given in both T

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