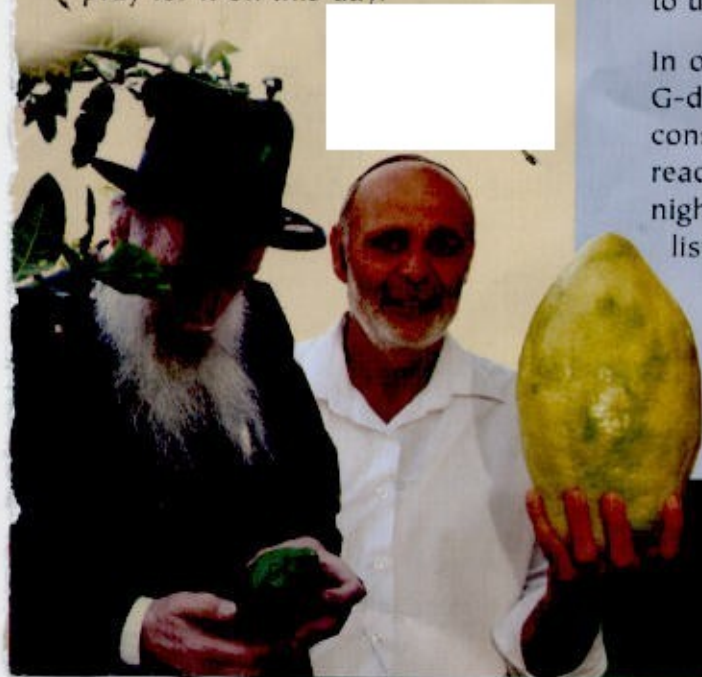


THE  
B'NAI  
YESASCHAR

writes of a custom which is alluded to in the Mishna which tells us about the New Year for Trees.

The Mishna calls the New Year "Rosh HaShana L'Ilan," The New Year for a Tree. Why did the Mishna refer to "tree" in the singular rather than in the plural? Why wasn't the New Year called "Rosh HaShana L'Ilanot," The New Year for Trees? The answer, the B'nai Yesaschar writes, stems from something our sages have told us: ***On Tu B'Shvat, we should pray that come next Sukkos, we are able to acquire a beautiful and kosher Esrog,*** so we can fulfill the commandment of taking that one on the Four Species to the fullest. This is alluded to by the Mishna's use of the word "tree" in the singular: THE tree that we need in order to fulfill a commandment begins its new year, and in order to assure that we can obtain the fruit of THAT tree, we should pray for it on this day.



ט"ו  
בשבט

THE 15TH DAY OF THE MONTH OF SHVAT  
MARKS THE BEGINNING OF  
THE "NEW YEAR" FOR TREES.

There are many laws regarding agriculture that are affected by this date. Regarding the young trees, the Torah forbids consumption of the fruit for the first three years and permits full use of the produce anywhere from the fourth year on. The date that determines the "age" of any tree in Israel is Tu B'Shvat, no matter when in the year it was planted.

Additionally, Jews are required to separate Terumos and Maasros, portions of the produce of the fields, on an annual basis. The cutoff date for the "fiscal" agricultural year is also Tu B'Shvat.

Tu B'Shvat is a day on which we pray that we continue to receive G-d's blessing in the form of plentiful fruits. We ask that we be allowed to partake from the fruit of the trees in the year to come. It is also a day on which we are obliged to recognize Who provides us with fruit -- and with sustenance, in general. It is a day on which we should demonstrate that we use the sustenance provided to us for holy purposes.

In order to commemorate the day and to highlight our thanks to G-d for giving us the Land of Milk and Honey, we indulge in consumption of many different types of fruits. (There is a special reading called "Pri Eitz Hadar," which some people read on the night of Tu B'Shvat. It includes portions of Mishnah and Zohar and lists many fruits for people to enjoy at the table.) There is no better way of accomplishing these tasks than by taking out a fruit, and making the blessing upon it before eating.

*This year Tu B'Shvat falls on  
January 22, 2008*

THERE IS A CUSTOM TO CANDY OR PICKLE  
THE ACTUAL ESROG USED THE PREVIOUS SUKKOS,  
AND EAT IT ON TU B'SHVAT.