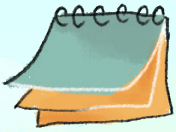


טו שבט תשפ"ג Tu Bishvat February 6, 2023

• The Calendar • **בְּנֵי דְיוֹקָא**

What is Tu Bishvat? "Tu" stands for ט"ו, which has the numerical value of 15. So Tu Bishvat is the 15th day of Shevat.

According to the Mishnah, there are four dates during the year that are each called "New Year" for different reasons, and Tu Bishvat is one of them.

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:1

There are four new years:

- (1) The 1st day of Nisan is the new year for counting the years of a king's reign and knowing when the new season of holidays starts.
- (2) The 1st day of Elul is the new year for grouping newborn animals together in order to give one tenth to the kohanim...
- (3) The 1st day of Tishrei is the new year for the Jewish calendar, knowing when the shemittah and yovel years start, counting the first three years of a new plant (when its fruits are forbidden), and grouping vegetable harvests together in order to give portions to kohanim, Levi'im, and people who are poor.
- (4) The 1st day of Shevat is the new year for the tree—according to Beit Shammai. Beit Hillel say: the 15th day of Shevat.

משנה ראש השנה א:א

אַרְבָּעָה רֵאשֵׁי שָׁנִים הֵם.

(1) בְּאֶחָד בְּנִיסָן רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְמַלְכִּים וְלְרֹגְלִים.

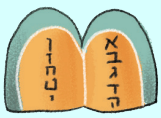
(2) בְּאֶחָד בְּאֵלוּל רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְמַעֲשֵׂר בְּהֵמָה...

(3) בְּאֶחָד בְּתִשְׁרֵי רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְשָׁנִים וְלְשִׁמְטִין וְלִיּוֹבְלוֹת, לְנִטְיָעָה וְלִירְקוֹת.

(4) בְּאֶחָד בְּשִׁבְט רֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְאֵילָן, בְּדַבְּרֵי בֵּית שַׁמַּי. בֵּית הַלֵּל אוֹמְרִים, בְּחֻמְשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ:

This mishnah calls new year #4 the new year of the tree, but it really has to do with **fruit**. Read on and you'll see how!





עֲרֵלָה (Orlah)

- ◆ For the first three years after a tree is planted, it's called "orlah" and you can't eat its fruit.

נִטְעַר רְבִיעִי (Neta Reva'i)

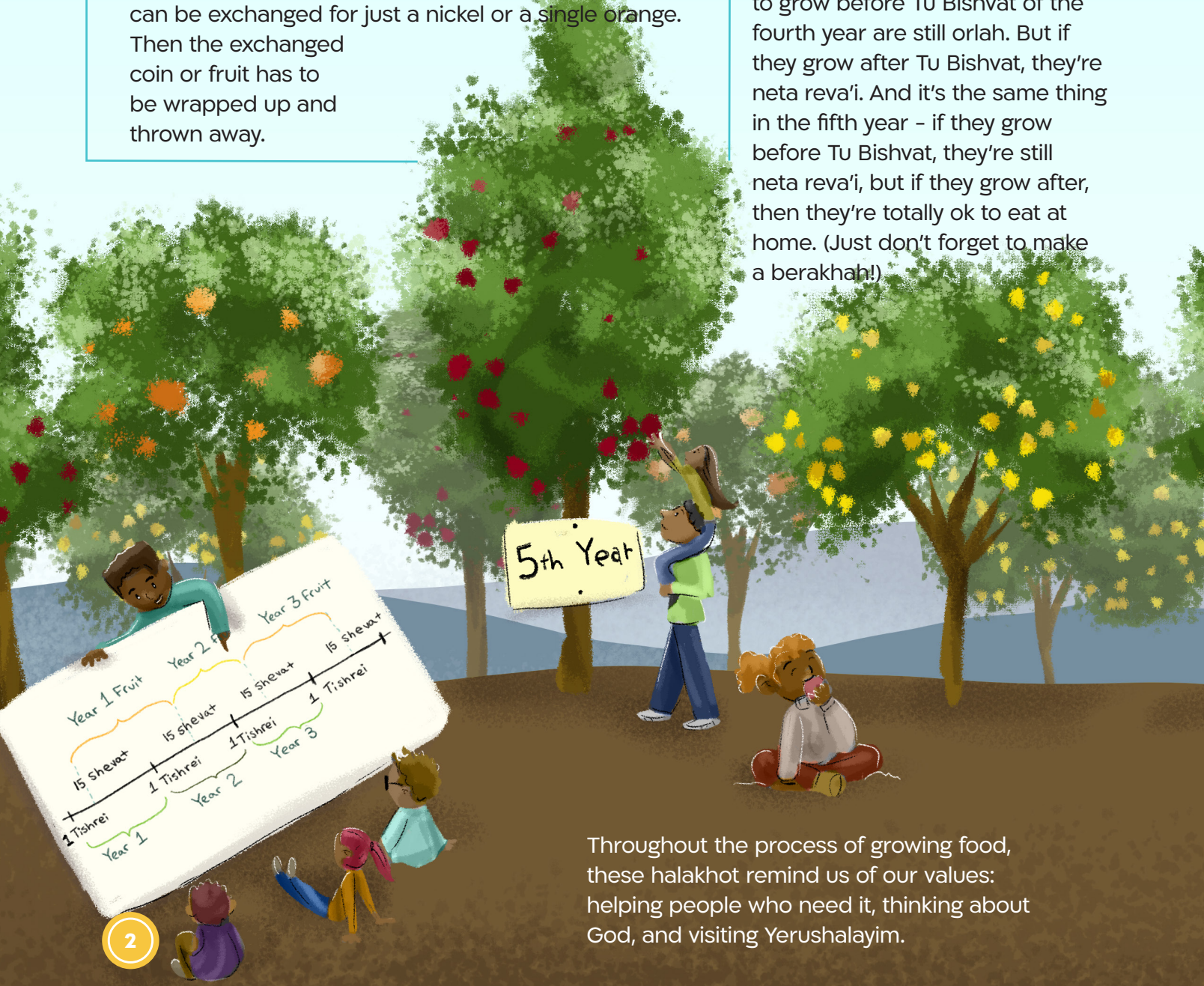
- ◆ In the fourth year after a tree is planted, it's called "neta reva'i (fourth year growth)." You can eat its fruit, but only in Yerushalayim, and you have to be טָהוֹר (tahor, pure).
- ◆ Today, now that there's no Beit Ha-Mikdash, you exchange neta reva'i fruit for a coin or for regular fruit, even if they have very little value. So a lot of neta reva'i can be exchanged for just a nickel or a single orange. Then the exchanged coin or fruit has to be wrapped up and thrown away.



Tu Bishvat, Orlah, and Neta Reva'i

We don't actually count **tree** years from the date the tree is planted! We count tree years from Rosh Hashanah (the first day of Tishrei). So if you plant a tree in the springtime, in the month of Iyyar, then that tree officially turns one year old on Rosh Hashanah (even though it's just five months later).

But **fruit** years start on Tu Bishvat. That means that fruit that begins to grow before Tu Bishvat of the fourth year are still orlah. But if they grow after Tu Bishvat, they're neta reva'i. And it's the same thing in the fifth year - if they grow before Tu Bishvat, they're still neta reva'i, but if they grow after, then they're totally ok to eat at home. (Just don't forget to make a berakhah!)



Throughout the process of growing food, these halakhot remind us of our values: helping people who need it, thinking about God, and visiting Yerushalayim.

תְּרוּמָה (Terumah) and מַעֲשֵׂר (Ma'aser)

Terumah means "donation."

- ◆ Portions of produce were given (donated) to kohanim in the times of the Beit Ha-Mikdash.

Ma'aser means "a tenth."

- ◆ Farmers had to separate a tenth of their produce for different reasons in the time of the Beit Ha-Mikdash.
- ◆ Some ma'aser was given to Levi'im, some to people who were poor, and some had to be taken to Yerushalayim and eaten there.

Today, terumah and ma'aser must still be taken from fruit grown in Eretz Yisrael. Because there's no Beit Ha-Mikdash, though, it's much less than a tenth, and the separated fruit cannot be eaten by anyone.

טו בִּשְׁוֹט

Tu Bishvat, Terumah, and Ma'aser

Tu Bishvat is the start date for calculating how much terumah and ma'aser to give every year.

שְׁמִטָּה (Shemittah)

- ◆ Every seventh year in Eretz Yisrael.
- ◆ No one can work the land, and crops become public property so anyone can come and eat them.

טו בִּשְׁוֹט Tu Bishvat and Shemittah

Shemittah starts with Rosh Hashanah. But some people think that fruit grown between Rosh Hashanah and Tu Bishvat really belong to the sixth year, and only fruit grown after Tu Bishvat are really part of shemittah. And that would last until the next Tu Bishvat, even after shemittah is officially over.





Now you know all about orlah and how it works. But what does this mitzvah mean, and why do we observe it?

Vayikra Rabbah 25

R. Yehudah ben Pazi taught: Oh Adam, the first human, if only you could see how well things turned out! You weren't even able to follow your commandment for one hour, but your children wait to eat fruit for three years, observing the mitzvah of orlah.

ויקרא רבה כה

דַּרְשׁ רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּן פָּזִי,
מִי יִגְלֶה עֶפְרַיִם מֵעֵינַיִךְ אָדָם
הָרֵאשׁוֹן, שֶׁלֹּא יָבִילֶתְ לְעֵמֶד עַל
צְוִיֶיךָ שְׁעָה אֶחָת, וְהָרִי בְּנֵיֶיךָ
מִמַּחְיֵינִין לְעֵרְלָה שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים.

R. Yehudah ben Pazi is pointing out a contrast between Adam, who could not wait to eat forbidden fruit for even one hour, and Benei Yisrael, who keep the mitzvah of orlah by not eating forbidden fruit for years.

The midrash is pointing out progress in the world; humanity seems to be getting a lot better. And wow, it's impressive that people are able to observe a really difficult mitzvah like orlah. That's worth celebrating!

- ◆ Growth can mean a lot of things. Trees and kids get bigger, and we also become more mature and capable. What are ways you have grown since the last Tu Bishvat? How do you think you might grow before the next one?
- ◆ What are hard mitzvot that you feel proud to be able to do?
- ◆ Part of what's hard about the mitzvah of orlah is the need to be patient. Have you ever planted something and helped it grow? How might it feel to plant a tree and help it grow for three years, but not to be able to eat its fruit that whole time?
- ◆ What are other times when it's useful to be patient? When is it difficult? Do you think it's true that "good things come to those who wait"?

