

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION celebrating the Jewish holiday of Tu b'Shevat, the New Year for Trees, to be observed on Monday, January 25, 2016

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Tu b'Shevat, the New Year for Trees, to be observed on Monday, January 25, 2016; and

WHEREAS, Tu b'Shevat, the 15th of Shevat on the Jewish calendar is the day which marks the beginning of a new year for trees; this is the season in which the earliest-blooming trees in the Land of Israel emerge from their winter sleep and begin a new fruit-bearing cycle; and

WHEREAS, The Jewish religion marks the day of Tu b'Shevat by eating fruit, particularly from the kinds that are singled out by the Torah in its praise of the bounty of the Holy Land: grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates; and

WHEREAS, If tasting any of these fruit for the first time this season, worshippers remember to recite the Shehecheyanu blessing, a blessing recited on joyous occasions, thanking God for sustaining them and enabling them to reach this occasion; and

WHEREAS, On this day, Jewish people remember that man is a tree of the field and reflects on the lessons they derive from their botanical analogue; and

WHEREAS, According to Biblical law, there is a seven year agricultural cycle, concluding with the Sabbatical year; when the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem, on years one, two, four and five of this cycle, farmers were required to separate a 10th of their produce and eat it in Jerusalem; and

WHEREAS, This tithe is called Maaser Sheni, the Second Tithe, because it is in addition to the (two percent which must be given to the Kohain, and the) 10 percent which is given to the Levite; and

WHEREAS, On the third and sixth years of the cycle, instead of the owners eating the Maaser Sheni in Jerusalem, they gave this second tithe to the poor, who were permitted to consume it wherever they wished; and

WHEREAS, It takes approximately four months for the rains of the new year to saturate the soil and trees, and produce fruit; on the Sabbatical year, no tithes are separated and all produce which grows during this year is ownerless and free for anyone to take; and

WHEREAS, It was therefore of vital importance to ascertain when the new year started for produce; Rabbis established that a fruit which blossomed before the 15th of Shevat is produce of the previous year; if it blossomed afterwards, it is produce of the new year; and

WHEREAS, By comparison, grains, vegetables, and legumes have the same New Year as humans, the 1st of Tishrei; this is because in the Mediterranean region, the rainy season begins with the festival of Sukkot; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that when customs of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Tu b'Shevat, the New Year for Trees, to be observed on Monday, January 25, 2016.