relationship with God. Essentially eating the "fruits" of this world helps us connect to God.

The Torah states that fruit from trees which were grown in the land of Israel may not be eaten during the first three years; the fourth year's fruit is for God, and after that, the fruit can be eaten. Each tree is considered to have aged one year as of Tu B'Shvat, no matter when in the year it was planted. The 15th day of the month of Shvat marks the beginning of the "new year" for trees for the purpose of calculating the age of trees for tithing.

I think it is important for us to view trees not only religiously, but scientifically. Since the beginning, trees have furnished us with two of life's essentials, food and oxygen. As we evolved, they provided additional necessities such as shelter, medicine, and tools. Today, their value continues to increase and more benefits of trees are being discovered as their role expands to satisfy the needs created by our modern lifestyles. Trees contribute to the environment by providing oxygen, improving air quality, climate amelioration, conserving water, preserving soil, and supporting wildlife. During the process of photosynthesis, trees take in carbon dioxide and produce the oxygen we breathe. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "One acre of forest absorbs six tons of carbon dioxide and puts out four tons of oxygen. This is enough to meet the annual needs of 18 people." Trees, shrubs and turf filter air by removing dust and absorbing other pollutants like carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide. Trees control climate by moderating the effects of the sun, rain and wind. Leaves absorb and filter the sun's radiant energy, keeping things cool in summer. Trees also preserve warmth by providing a screen from harsh wind. In addition to influencing wind speed and direction, they shield us from the downfall of rain, sleet and hail. Trees lower the air temperature and reduce the heat intensity of the greenhouse effect by maintaining low levels of carbon dioxide.